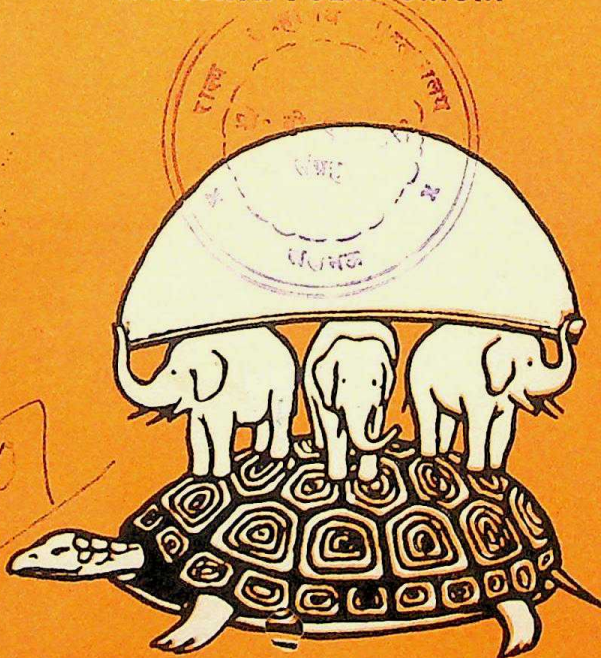


MYTHICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE HINDUS

ITS NORTH POLAR ORIGIN



MOHAMMAD ISHAQ SIDDIQI

744
To Emeritus Prof. B. N. Puri

With best-compliments
from the author

Md. Ishag Siadchigi

10.3.88



7/14
To Emeritus Prof. B. N. Puri

With best-compliments
from the author

Mod. Ishag Siolchizi

10.3.88

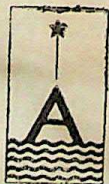


MYTHICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE HINDUS



ITS NORTH POLAR ORIGIN

Mohammad Ishaq Siddiqi



ACADEMY OF ATLANTOLOGY

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(INDIA)

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Lucknow : March 1984.

MD. ISHAQ SIDDIQI

INTRODUCTION

A comparative study of religious beliefs and practices of primitive tribes as well as of civilized nations reveals striking resemblances which can only be accounted for by a common origin at a particular place and spreading of ideas from there. According to some authorities on the subject, this place was the lost continent of Atlantis.

Atlantis was first described in detail by Plato (427?-347 B.C.) in two of his dialogues, *Timaeus* and *Critias*. According to his version it was in the Atlantic Ocean and was wiped out by a violent earthquake. As there is no trace of this continent in the Atlantic Ocean, some scholars believe that Atlantis never existed while others are of the opinion that it did exist, if not in the Atlantic Ocean then somewhere else. Innumerable books and articles have been published in European languages about the lost continent since Plato. To quote the German scientist Otto Muck : "More books are said to have been written about Atlantis than about any subject short of the Bible, some twenty thousand."* This vast literature on the subject, which is still growing, has been classified as a separate branch of knowledge, known as Atlantology. It is a combination of various disciplines and its aim is to find out the location of Atlantis and to trace the origin of culture in general and religion in particular to the lost continent. Although more than a dozen sites have been proposed for Atlantis, none appears to me convincing.

**The Secret of Atlantis* (Fontana Paperback, 1979) p.7

While reading *Paradise Found : The Cradle of the Human Race at the North Pole* by Dr. William F. Warren (London, 1885), it came to my knowledge that the French astronomer, Jean Sylvain Bailly, (1736-93), suggested in his books *Lettres sur l' Origine des Sciences* (1777) and *Lettres sur l' Atlantide de Platon* (1779) that Atlantis was in the Paleo-Arctic Ocean. The idea appealed to me and I made an attempt to verify his hypothesis independently and came to the conclusion that the French savant was correct in so far as the location of Atlantis is concerned. However, on the basis of overwhelming evidence at my disposal, I can assert that it was not a continent but only a small volcanic island at the North Pole, which submerged in the Arctic Ocean in prehistoric times. This vanished North Polar Island was the fountain-head of religion and the birth place of civilization. It was also the basis of mythical geography of all the religions of the world inclusive of Hinduism.

Although many books and articles have been published about the mythical geography of the Hindus as narrated in Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Puranas, their writers have only tried to identify the location of the lands, mountains, etc. mentioned in the sacred scriptures. Unfortunately, no attempt has been made to sort out facts from fiction. The idea that the Hindu geography is North Polar in origin did not occur to these writers and consequently their identifications are mostly incorrect. Even the pioneer work of

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*, (Poona, 1903) gives no details about the topography of the North Pole. I have worked out this topography in great detail. Besides, I have endeavoured to show the way various geographical systems were devised to suit the fancy of Hindu cosmologists. I hope the hypothesis presented in this book will also help scholars to interpret and explain the mythical geography of other religions.

Here it is necessary to clarify that this book is a collection of my articles originally published under the title *Articles on Atlantology- An Attempt to Reconstruct Man's Primitive Philosophy* from 1981 to 1983. I expect everyone who is eager to know the origin of religion will find the book an illuminating reading.

MOHAMMAD ISHAQ SIDDIQI

Note :

At the end of each chapter (originally published as a separate article) I have given the month and year of publication and my name in short as ISHAQ SIDDIQI. My full name is MOHAMMAD ISHAQ SIDDIQI as given above and on the title page.

When one begins to study an area in physics or another field of pure research that is confused and full of mistakes and then through one's study the subject becomes clear and whole, it assumes a perspective and beauty.

DR. S. CHANDRASEKHAR
Nobel Laureate

1

SECRET OF THE SACRED NORTH

Dr. William F. Warren, (1833-1929), S.T.D., LL.D., was President of Boston University, Corporate Member of the American Oriental Society, and the author of several books in German and English, the most popular being *Paradise Found : The Cradle of the Human Race at the North Pole*.¹ Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) has made a reference to this book in his *Arctic Home in the Vedas*.² Tilak was also the author of *The Orion or Researches into the Antiquity of the Vedas*.³ These three books have been a source of constant inspiration to me, and have inspired me to take up the present research.

In India, Tilak's researches are still remembered but Warren's great work has gone into oblivion. I wonder why he has been totally forgotten, may be his theory was found untenable. However, in my view, it deserves reconsideration.

1. London : Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1885, XXIV, 505 pp. 10 illustrations.
2. Poona : Tilak Bros., 1st. published in 1903, reprinted in 1925, 1956, ix, 471 pp. illustrated.
3. Poona : Tilak Bros., 1st. published in 1893, reprinted in 1916, 1925, 1955, viii, 243 pp. illustrated.

Dr. Warren was quite sure that the earth of the ancients (as depicted in ancient cosmology and mythical geography) was a sphere, not flat as is generally understood. On the other hand, the data so laboriously collected by him and so nicely presented in his book compels me to conclude that the earth of the mythical geography was not only flat but a small volcanic island at the North Pole, which submerged long ago.

To regard North Pole as the cradle of the human race is sheer fantasy. According to anthropologists man evolved in equatorial region of South East Africa.

Unfortunately, Dr. Warren could not lay hands on *The True Key to Ancient Cosmology and Mythical Geography*,⁴ as he claimed. However, he was correct to the extent that the mythical geography of every religion reveals North Pole as the cradle of mankind. The idea of North Polar Island did not occur to him and he was misled. He also made no allowance for the diffusion of ideas and cultural contacts. It is my good fortune to reopen the case and invite the attention of the scholars to reconsider his theory and to revive it with modification, namely, to proceed on the hypothesis that the earth of the ancients was a small island at the North Pole. It is implied that when the North Polar Island (*Atlantis* of Plato, *Jambudvipa* of Hindus) was inhabited, its climate was congenial, which was only possible during interglacial period.

It will be evident from the extracts reproduced hereafter that North has been regarded as a sacred quarter through-

4. Dr. Warren's famous pamphlet, published by Ginn, Heath & Co., Boston, 1882, 3rd ed., illustrated.

out the world. As to why it is so, I suggest the following hypothetical reasons :—

1. Hindus regard the North as the abode of the gods (*Deva-Loka*) and the South as the abode of the god of death (*Yama-Loka*). Conservative Hindus avoid sleeping with their feet towards South as it may shorten life or lead to premature death.
2. Ancient works on Hindu Astronomy unanimously declare that *Mt. Meru* (or *Sumeru*), the abode of the gods, is at the North Pole. But now no mountain is there. Its non-existence, however, does not mean that it never existed. It has disappeared. How ? I guess that it was a volcano, rather part of a volcanic island, which submerged long ago.
3. The North Polar Island was inhabited by certain daring tribes living on the Asian coast of the Arctic Ocean in prehistoric times. These tribes were the real founders or fathers of religion. (May be they were deified). Their ethnic and linguistic affinities are difficult to determine.
4. When man (collective name for the inhabitants of the North Polar Island) was living at the North Pole, the land of the dead was supposed to be beyond the Arctic Ocean in South, where the sun sets.
5. When man migrated from there, the North Polar Island became the Paradise of myths and legends. To regard the North as sacred, to face it while worshipping or sacrificing, or burying the dead facing it, is an attitude which we may call the nostalgia

for the North or the nostalgia for the Paradise.

6. After migration from the North Polar Island, its inhabitants were aware of only two directions, namely, South (the direction of sunrise and sunset) and North, which they had left.

The tribes living in the temperate zones or tropical regions were also aware of only two directions, viz., East and West, directions of sunrise and sunset. For them North and South had no meaning as East and West were meaningless for the inhabitants of the North Polar Island. When the North Polar immigrants settled in southern latitudes and mingled with the local population, four directions were recognised.

7. At some stage in human history

North was equated with East,

South was equated with West.

Thus the land of the gods is in North or East and land of the dead is in the South or West.

As North and East are the sacred quarters and South and West, the sinister quarters, the ancient "Egyptians often reduced the four quarters or directions to two, using the term East in a sense sufficiently broad to include both East and North, and the term West in a sense sufficiently broad to include both West and South. "(Warren, *Paradise Found*, p.223).

I hope the discriminating readers will find the above reasons logical and the extracts, that follow, lending support to my hypothesis.

Lucknow : January, 1981

ISHAQ SIDDIQI

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NORTH IN WORLD'S RELIGIONS

AINO

Ainos, who are supposed to have been the first inhabitants (of Japan), are believed to have come into the archipelago "from the North."

In burial, their dead are always so placed that when resurrected their faces will be set toward the lofty northern country from which their ancestors are believed to have come, and to which their spirits are believed to have returned.

—Warren, *Paradise Found* p. 245

It may not be devoid of interest to mention here that the Ainos bury their dead with the head to the South. The Aino, to-day, as he did in ancient times, buries his dead by covering the body with matting, and placing it with head to South in a grave which is about three feet deep.

Henry Von Siebold : *Notes on Japanese Archaeology with especial Reference to the Stone Age* (Yokohama, 1879) p. 6; Warren p. 245

CHINESE

The Emperor and his assistants, when officiating before the Altar of Heaven, always face the North.

English Translation of the Chinese Ritual for the Sacrifice to Heaven (Shanghai, 1877) pp. 25-28, 31, 48; Warren p. 216

Always, from the earliest times the Emperor sat in the north, "facing south" and the people worshipped, "facing,

north", a rule as strictly observed as the Islamic Law of facing towards Mecca.

Lin Yutang : *Imperial Peking* (London, 1967) p. 34

CHRISTIAN

At first view it seems strange that in the Middle Ages, in Christian Europe, the North should have come to be regarded as the special abode of Satan and his subjects, and that on the north side of some churches, near the baptismal font, there should have been, a "Devil's Door", which was opened to let the evil spirit pass to his own place at the time of the renunciation of him by the person baptized. The simple explanation of this is found in the fact that the people were taught that their old gods, whom they had worshipped when pagans, were devils .. A similar change seems to have occurred among the Iranians after Mazdeism had transformed their ancient Daevas from gods to demons. (See *Iranian*.)

—Warren, *Paradise Found*, pp. 207-8

According to Pinedo, the south side, whence the warm winds blow, pertains to the Holy Spirit, inspiring the soul with the fire of charity and divine love; the North side, exposed to the cold winds, pertains to the devil and his institutions that freeze the soul.

J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (London, 1962) p. 18

DIN-ILAH

Akbar was not a strict follower of Islam. He had tried to harmonise the teachings of all religions in his Din-Ilahi or

religion of God, and had accorded great importance to the rising sun in its observations. He had desired that he should be buried with his face to the rising sun, contrary to the Muslim custom in India of having the face turned towards Mecca, i.e. to the west. His body lies in the direction of the astronomical north and south lines, and the Pole Star can be seen from the main gateway shining over the centre of the mausoleum.

—B. D. Sanwal, *Agra and Its Monuments* (Orient Longmans, 1968 pp. 69-70

EGYPTIAN

To the ancient Egyptian the west was the land of souls; he complains :

"The West is a land of sleep and of heavy shadows .
Let me be placed by the edge of water with my face to
the North, that the breezes may caress me."

G. Maspero : *The Dawn of Civilization*, Eng. Tr. London 1901,
p. 113; *Ency. of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 10, p. 75

ETRUSCAN

The Etruscans located the abode of the gods in the north, and hence their soothsayers when about to speak, would turn to face the south—that is, they would take up a position which identified them, ideologically, with the gods.

J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (London, 1962) p. 233

GONDS

In burying they lay the head to the South and the feet

to the North, *as the home of their gods is supposed to be in the latter direction*. They call the North Deoguhr sometimes, and the South, Muraho, is looked upon as a region of terror; so the feet are laid towards Deoguhr in order that they may carry the dead man in the right direction.

H. Spencer : *Descriptive Sociology*, Divn. I Pt. 3, A, p. 36 Warren, pp. 211-12

GREEK

In prayer the Greeks turned towards the North, and from Homer we know that when they addressed the "Olympian" gods they stretched out their hands "toward the starry heavens;" Greek prayers, therefore, must have been addressed toward the northern heavens.

—Warren, *Paradise Found*, p. 213

HAWAIIAN

The Hawaiian soothsayer, or kilo-kilo, turned always to the North when observing the heavens for signs or omens, or when regarding the flight of birds for similar purposes. The ancient Hindus turned also to the North for divining purposes, and so did the Iranians before the schism, after which they placed the devs in the North; so did the Greek, and so did the Scandinavians before their conversion to Christianity.

A. Fornander : *The Polynesian Race* (London, 1878) vol. I p. 240;
Warren, P. 213

IRANIAN

While in portions of the Avestan literature (generally the

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 older) the heaven of Ahura Mazda is in the North, in other portions the North is the world of death and demons. Bleek's Avesta, I, pp. 3, 137, 143; II. 30, 31; III. 137, 138 *et passim* Darmesteter, Introduction, p -lxvii-lxxx. Haug, *Religion of the Parsis*, pp. 267 ff. (cf. *Christian* and *Scottish* for a similar change).

Warren, *Paradise Found* p. 208

JEWISH

To Ezekiel the true God reveals himself from above and from the North (Ez. 1:4). In that quarter was God's holy mountain* (Is 14:13), the City of the Great King (PS. 48:2), the place where divine power had hung the earth upon nothing (Job 26: 7). Hence the priest officiating at the altar, both in the tabernacle and later in the temple, faced the North. (Leviticus, Chap. 1:11).

Warren : *Paradise Found* pp. 206-207

Levite butchers continued the old ritual of turning the victims' head to the north when they sacrificed.

Robert Graves, *The White Goddess* (London, 1961) p. 441

MANDAEAN

Astronomical objects, sun, moon, planets, comets, star clusters, even individual stars might become the centre of a cult, as is *Polaris* with the Mandeans who orient their worship on that particular star.

George B. Vetter : *Magic and Religion* (Philosophical Library, New York 1958) p. 254

*Meru of the Hindus—Ishaq

MANICHEAN

"The Good is a Tree of Life; it occupies the regions of the East, West and North; the Evil is a Tree of Death (and) it occupies the Southern regions."

In Iranian thought the evil land was pictured as in the North; Mani reversed this, for in Babylonia the South was the demon's world.

—Duncan Greenlees : *The Gospel of the Prophet Mani* (Adyar, Madras, 1956) p 305

ROMAN

It is well known that the Romans placed the seat of the gods in the extreme North.

Oriental Journal (Chicago, 1880) vol. I, p, 143; Warren, p. 214

The Etruscan and Roman augurs considered thunder and lightning in the northern sky more significant than in any other quarter, being 'higher and *nearer to the abode of Jove.*'

Warren, *Paradise Found*, p. 213

SABAEAN

To this day the Haranite Sabaeans—the most direct heirs of the religious traditions of the Tigro-Euphratean world — construct their temples with careful reference to the ancient faith. Their priests also in the act of sacrifice like all ancient priesthoods, face the North. (See *Mandaean*).

Warren, *Paradise Found* p. 210

In Scottish Mythology the north wind brings the evil spirits and the south wind the good spirits. "Shut the windows towards the north, and open the windows towards the south, and do not let the fire go out", is an instruction given in a folk tale by a man who desires his house to be guarded against the visits of demons.

D. A. Mackenzie : *Myths of Crete and Pre-Hellenic Europe* (London, n. d.) p. 309

YEZIDI

After death, the body of a Yezidi, like that of a Moham-
medan is washed in running water and then buried with the
face turned towards the north star.

Amongst the Yezidis the ancient name for God was
Azed, and from it (is) derived the name of (this) sect...
Their *Kublah* was the polar star and not the East.

A. H. Layard : *Discoveries in Nineveh and Babylon* (London, 1853)
p. 94

The above is merely a random sampling. By systematic
survey, I hope, more examples will come to light.

So far the reversal of position of North in Iranian,
Scottish and Christian religions is concerned, it has nothing
to do with schism or degradation of pagan gods. It may be
due to change of climate. North became the abode of
Satan or Devil, when the North Polar Island was glaciated.
South became good instead of bad when man was forced
to migrate from the cold North to the warm South.

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NORTH IN HINDUISM

Illiterate Hindus believe that sleeping with feet to the north is an insult to the *deotas* as well as to the ancestors (*pitrs*), as they reside in that quarter. Literate Hindus have the same belief, on the theory that the attractive influence of the North is dangerous.

Good Hindus will not sleep with their feet to the East out of respect for the Ganges (or because that would be an omen that their ashes would soon be carried to the sacred river), which flows to the East; *or to the North, out of respect for Devi.**

Another version is that Hindus should sleep with their *heads* to the East because that will bring prosperity and learning, or to the South because that is respectful to Jampurī†, the city of the lower world, while to sleep with one's head to the West brings trouble, and to the North disease and death.

H. A. Rose : *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province*, (Lahore, 1919) Vol. I p 132.

According to the *Kalika Purana* "the side sacred to Kuvera (North) is most gratifying to Siva; therefore, seated with the face directed to that side, should Chandika be always worshipped".

R. L. Mitra : *Indo-Aryans* (Delhi/Varanasi, Reprint 1969) Vol. I p. 72

* Explanation appears to be far-fetched. East is the direction of sunrise and hence auspicious.

** The goddess living on the golden mountain *Meru* at the North Pole, not Himalaya which is its substitute.

† *Yamapuri*—Ishaq

When people sit to repeat their sandhya prayers, they turn towards the East, if the worshippers be Vaishnavas, and towards the North if they be Saktas. The followers of Siva and Ganesa prefer the North.

The general rule, according to Vishnu, is that the worshipper may sit with his face towards the North or the East at his option.

Vachaspati Misra quotes an authority which improves upon this, and recommends the East for morning prayer, the West for evening prayer, and the North for prayer at night.

Ibid, pp. 72-73

In the *Kalika Puran* there is a detailed account of human sacrifices. It is stated therein "having placed the victim before the goddess, the worshipper should adore her by offering flowers, sandal paste, and bark, frequently repeating the *mantra* appropriate for sacrifice. Then facing the north and placing the victim to face the east, he should look backward and repeat this *mantra* :

"O man through my good fortune thou hast appeared as a victim, therefore I salute thee; thou multiform and of the form of a victim. Thou by gratifying Chandika, destroyest all evil incidents to the giver..."

There is another version of the same rite in *Tikha Kalpa*, a Ms work found in the Manipur State library. It is said : "The person offering the sacrifice should turn his face towards the north, and the victim should face the east. Water should be sprinkled on the victim, and the following *mantra* uttered :

"O Goddess, living on the *golden mountain*,* I offer this sacrifice to thee !"

Ency. of Religion & Ethics, (Edinburgh, 1913)
Vol. 6, p. 850, article "Human Sacrifice".

In Rajputana, the first day of ploughing after the rains begin, is known as the *halsotiya* festival. Omens being favourable, the villagers proceed to the fields, each householder carrying a new earthen pot coloured with turmeric, the virtues of which have already been explained, and full of *bajra* millet. *Looking to the north, the home of the gods,*** they make an obeisance to the earth, and then a selected man ploughs five furrows. The ploughman's hands and the bullock's hoofs are rubbed with henna, and the former receives a dinner of delicacies. In Mirzapur only the northern part of the field, that facing the Himalaya,** is dug up in five places with a piece of mango wood. The peasant, when he comes home, eats rich food and abstains from quarrels. All over the country the people seem to be becoming less careful about these observances.

W. Croocke : *An Introduction to the Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India*. (Allahabad, 1894) pp. 370-71

When the cotton is ripe and ready for picking, the women pickers go to the north or east quarters of the field with parched rice and sweetmeats. These directions are ofcourse selected *with reference to the Himalaya, the home the gods,* and the rising sun.

—Ibid. p. 382

* Obviously the golden mountain refers to *Meru*.

** Himalaya, the home of the gods, is a substitute for *Meru* —Ishaq.

In the Etan district the owner of the field places to the north of the pile of grain a threshing floor rake, a bullock's muzzle, and a rope at a distance of three spans from the piled grain...*He then bows to the north, the home of the gods, and mutters a prayer* ..

—Ibid p.p. 385-86

In the Eastern Panjab grain must not be measured on the day of the new or full moon, and the Saturday is a bad day for it. It must be begun at dawn, or midday, or sunset, or midnight when the Bhuts are otherwise engaged. Four men go inside the enclosure line with a wooden measuring vessel, and no one must come near them till they have finished. They sit facing the *north* and spread a cloth on the ground. One fills the measure from the heap with the winnowing fan, another empties it on the cloth, and the two others carry off the full cloth and empty it out, substituting an empty one for it.

—Ibid pp. 386-87

CONCLUSION

A review of the data presented leads me to conclude that if religion would have originated in temperate zones or tropical regions, East and West, being the directions of sunrise and sunset would have occupied primary position as we find in Islam. (p. 16) The emphasis on North and South in orientation supports my thesis that religion is North Polar in origin.

APPENDIX

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ISLAMIC ATTITUDE

To God belong the East and the West : whithersoever ye turn, there is the Presence of God. For God is All-Pervading, All-knowing.

—*Quran*, Sura II, verse 115*

(He is) Lord of the two Easts and Lord of the two Wests**

Quran, Sura LV, verse 17

(He is) Lord of the East and the West : there is no god but He : Take Him therefore for (thy) Disposer of Affairs.

—*Quran*, Sura LXXIII, verse 9,

It is noteworthy that the emphasis here is on the East and West in contrast to North and South which were/are *qibla* of others

Qibla means the direction towards which the face is turned in prayer. The first *qibla* of the Muslims was Jerusalem, sacred both to the Jews and the Christians. For change of *qibla* from Jerusalem to Ka'ba (in Mecca) see *Quran*, Sura II, verses 142-144.

**The Meaning of the Glorious Quran*, Text, Translation and Commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (Cairo, Beirut, 2 Vols.)

**The *two Easts* are the two extreme points where the sun rises during the year, and includes all the points between

Similarly, the *two Wests* include the two extreme points of the sun's setting and all the points between.

—Abdullah Yusuf Ali

2

THE DAY OF THE GODS

"In those days...the seasons were much shorter than they are now. A year then was but as a day of our time."¹ This memory of the remote past is part of the mythology of the Navajo Indians of North America.

The Greek historian, "Herodotus (400 B. C.) mentions a people who sleep during the six months of the year."²

"Both in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* the learned Anton Krichenbauer finds two kinds of days continually referred to. In what he considers the more ancient portions of the poems, the day is a period of one year's duration, especially when used in describing the life and exploits of the gods; in what he considers the more modern portions the term has its modern meaning as a period of twenty-four hours. He quotes Lepsius as recognizing a similar "one-day year" in the Egyptian and other ancient chronologies; also the mention made of it by Palaifatos and Suidas."³

1. W. Matthews, "The Navajo Mythology" in *The American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal*, (Chicago) July 1, 1883, p. 209, quoted from W. F. Warren's *Paradise Found : The Cradle of the Human Race at the North Pole*, (London, 1885) p. 201
2. Narrien's *Origin and Progress of Astronomy*, p. 31, quoted from Tilak's *Orion* (Poona, 1955) p. 31
3. Warren, *Paradise Found* (London, 1885) p. 200

In the Zoroastrian scripture *Zend-Avesta*,⁴ Fargard II we read :

"O Maker of the material world, thou Holy one ! what (lights are there to give light) in the Vara which Yima made?"

"Ahura Mazda answered : There are uncreated lights and created lights. There the stars, the moon, and the sun are only once (a year) seen to rise and set, and a year seems only as a day."

This memory of year-long day also survives in India. In *Bhagavad-Gita*, The Song of God,⁵ (Chapter, VIII, 24-25) Arjuna asks Sri Krishna about the way to eternal *Brahman* and He explains:

"I show you two paths.

Let a yogi choose either

When he leaves this body :

The path that leads back to birth,

The path of no return.

There is the path of light,

Of fire and day,

The path of the moon's bright fortnight

And the six months' journey,

Of the sun to the north :

The Knower of Brahman,

Who takes this path

Goes to Brahman:

He does not return.

4. Translated by James Darmesteter, *The Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford, 1880), Vol. IV, p. 20

5. Translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood (Sri Rama Krishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, 1954), pp. 137-39.

There is the path of night and smoke,
The path of the moon's dark fortnight
And the six months' journey
Of the sun to the south :
The Yogi who takes this path
Will reach the lunar light :
This path leads back
To human birth, at last.

...The scriptures declare that merit can be acquired by studying the Vedas, performing ritualistic sacrifices, practising austerities and giving alms. But the Yogi who has understood this teaching of mine will gain more than any who do these things. He will reach that *universal source*, which is *the uttermost abode of God*."

The translators explain in a footnote : The "path of no return" is called in the Upanishads the *deva-yana* "the path of the bright ones," who are liberated from rebirth. The path that leads back to birth is the *pitri-yana*, the "path of the fathers."

—*Ibid* p. 137

According to Hindu astronomy *deva-yana* denoted the period from vernal equinox to autumnal equinox, and *pitri-yana*, the period from autumnal equinox to vernal equinox. These terms, which we find in the Vedas and Upanishads were later on discarded⁶ and replaced by:

uttarayana northward course (of the sun); half-year in which the sun moves northwards, (from winter solstice to summer solstice).

6. The exact period of this change is not known.

dakshinayana southern path (*i. e.* to the realm of death), southern course of the sun; the half-year in which the sun moves from north to south, (from summer to winter solstice).⁷

The vernal equinox occurs on or about March 21, and the autumnal equinox on or about September 23. The winter solstice occurs on or about December 22, and the summer solstice on or about June 21

Now we cometo the relevance of these terms to the North Pole. It is well-known that at the North Pole there is a single day in a year and a single night, each of six months duration. This phenomenon is peculiar to the polar regions.⁸ Hindus were well-aware of it as will be evident from the following quotations :

That which is a year is but a single day of the gods.

—*Taittiriya Brahmana* III. 9.22. 1

A year (human) is a day and a night of the gods: thus are the two divided, the northern passage of the sun is the day and the southern the night.

—*Code of Manu*, I.67

The northern progress of the sun is a day with the gods. The southern progress of the sun is (with them) a night. A year is (with them) a day and a night.

—*The Institutes of Vishnu, Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. VII p. 77

From the above we may infer that Hindus regarded the North Pole as *deva-loka* or land of the gods. The sun rises at the North Pole on or about March 21 and sets about September 23. The day and night commence from March 21

7. *A Practical Sanskrit Dictionary* by A. A. Macdonell, (Oxford University Press, 1954) pp. 49, 115.

8. South Pole excluded from consideration as it is irrelevant.

and September 23; in other words, from vernal equinox and autumnal equinox, respectively.

The duration of day and night of the gods and the change from equinoxes to solstices will be clear from the annexed diagrams. (pp. 24-25)

In view of the above the origin of Hindu gods, their mode of worship and associated beliefs should be traced back to the North Pole.

"The Hindus consider it inauspicious for a man to die during the *pitriyana*, and the great Mahabharata warrior, Bhishma, is said to have waited on his death-bed until the sun passed through the winter solstice, as the *dakshinayana*, which is synonymous with the *pitriyana*, was then understood to mean the time required by the sun to travel from the summer to the winter solstice."

—B.G. Tilak, *Arctic Home in the Vedas* (Poona 1956) p. 70

According to *Bhagavad-Gita* (already quoted), dying during *deva-yana* leads to *Brahman* and frees the soul from the wheel of rebirth, whereas dying during *pitri-yana* leads to rebirth. That was the reason for Bhishma's not bidding farewell to life and to wait on the bed of arrows for the sun to resume its northern course.

Now the question arises : Where and how the sun leads to? There is evidence⁹ to suggest that sun was regarded as a vehicle (chariot or boat) which carried the souls of the persons dying during *deva-yana* (on its northward course) to *Brahman*. Then what is *Brahman*? The word is related to *Brahma*, who is creator. The *Brahma-loka* (realm of *Brahma*)

9. I shall present it in my article : *The Origin of Cremation*.

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 is highest in the universe.¹⁰ *Brahman* is the Impersonal Absolute Godhead, in other words, depersonalised *Brahma*. According to my hypothesis, the idea of one God was inspired in the primitive man by the Pole Star. So *Brahma*, *Brahma-loka* and *Brahman* are the various imaginary aspects of the Pole Star.

In this connection I would like to draw the attention of the scholars to the following verse of *Rig-veda* (I.183.6, I.184.6):

“We have passed o’er the limit of this darkness: our praise hath been bestowed on you, O Ashvins come hitherward by paths which gods have travelled. May we find strengthening food in full abundance.”

—Griffith, *Hymns of the Rig Veda* (Varanasi, 1963)
 Vol. I. pp. 247-48

“We have, O Ashvins! reached the *end of darkness*; now come to us by the *deva-yana* road.”

—Tilak, *Arctic Home in the Vedas* (Poona, 1956) p. 68

Tilak comments: “Passages like these clearly indicate that the road of the *deva-yana* commenced at the rise of the dawn, or after the end of darkness; and that it was the road by which Agni, Ashvins, Ushas, Surya and other matutinal deities travelled during their heavenly course.”

—*Ibid* p. 68

Tilak’s observation is correct but I would like to exclude Agni. Moreover, Tilak could not realise the full import of this remarkable passage. Note the anxiety for the end of darkness (of half-year long night) and longing for the appearance of the twin stars Costor and Pollux (Ashvins).

10. cf. The epithets used for God : *the universal source*, which is *the uttermost abode of God* in Gita, quoted on p. 19 (Italics mine). To an observer stationed at the North Pole, the Pole Star appears overhead.

It not only proves that the Vedic year commenced with the vernal equinox but also helps us to fix the date of the verse cited at the time when the vernal equinox was in the constellation Gemini (Twins). The appearance of this constellation at the end of half-year long night heralded sunrise at North Pole and it was but natural that the semi-starving inhabitants thereof prayed for "strengthening food in full abundance," *i. e.* animals which they hunted at the dawn of the half-year long day.

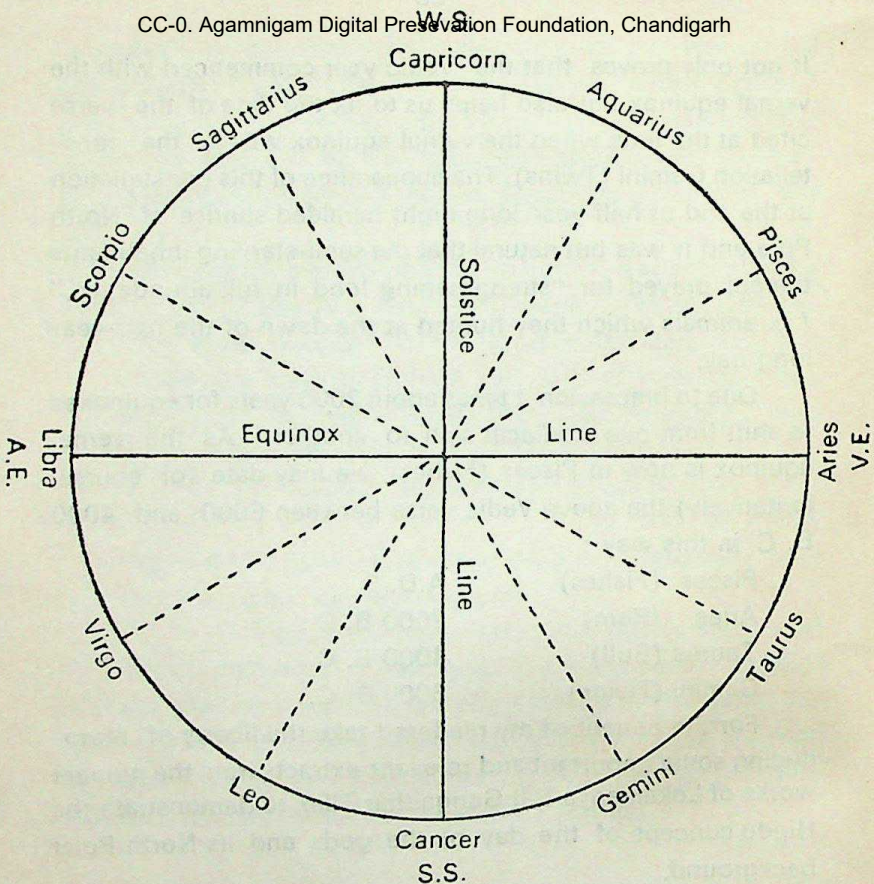
Due to precession it takes about 2000 years for equinoxes to shift from one zodiacal sign to another. As the vernal equinox is now in Pisces (Fishes), we may date (of course, tentatively) the above Vedic verse between 6000 and 4000 B. C. in this way :

Pisces (Fishes)	A.D. 1
Aries (Ram)	2000 B. C.
Taurus (Bull)	4000 B. C.
Gemini (Twins)	6000 B. C.

For the benefit of my readers I take the liberty of reproducing some important and relevant extracts from the pioneer works of Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak to demonstrate the Hindu concept of the day of the gods and its North Polar background.

LUCKNOW : May 1981

ISHAQ SIDDIQI



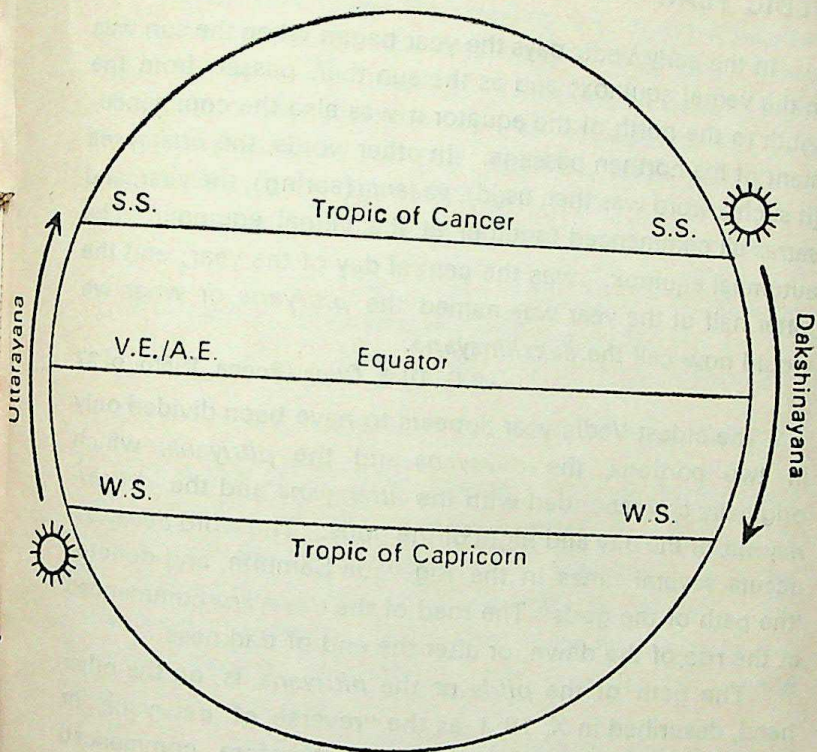
VE = Vernal Equinox, March 21
Sunrise at North Pole

AE = Autumnal Equinox, Sept. 23
Sunset at North Pole

Old Concept (Surya-Siddhanta)

Day of the Gods from V. E. to A. E.

Night of the Gods from A. E. to V. E.



SS = Summer Solstice, June 21

WS = Winter Solstice, Dec. 22

New Concept (Siddhanta-Shiromani)

Day of the Gods from W. S. to S. S.

Night of the Gods from S. S. to W. S.

VEDIC YEAR

In the early Vedic days the year began when the sun was in the vernal equinox; and as the sun then passed from the south to the north of the equator it was also the commencement of his northern passage. In other words, the *uttarayana* (if such a word was then used), *vasanta* (spring), the year, and *satras* all commenced together at the vernal equinox. The autumnal equinox... was the central day of the year; and the latter half of the year was named the *pitriyana* or what we would now call the *dakshinayana*.

—B.G. Tilak, *Orion* (Poona, 1955), p. 27

The oldest Vedic year appears to have been divided only in two portions, the *devayana* and the *pitriyana*, which originally corresponded with the *uttarayana* and the *dakshinayana*, or the day and night of the gods. The word *devayana* occurs several times in the Rig-veda Samhita, and denotes 'the path of the gods .. The road of the *devayana* commenced at the rise of the dawn, or after the end of darkness...

The path of the *pitrīs* or the *pitriyana*, is, on the other hand, described in X, 18, 1, as the "reverse of *devayana*, or the path of death." ... If the *devayana*, therefore, commenced with the dawn, we must suppose that the *pitriyana* commenced with the advent of darkness.

—B. G. Tilak, *Arctic Home in the Vedas*
(Poona, 1956), p. 68

It seems... very probable that the *devayana* and the *pitriyana* originally represented a two-fold division of the year, one of continuous light and the other of continuous darkness as at the North Pole.

—*Ibid* p' 69

VERY LONG SACRIFICE

The sacrifice called *Gavamayana* is a seasonal sacrifice It can be divided into three parts, — first part consisting of 180 days; the middle part consisting of one day called *Visuva* (equinox) and the last part consists of 180 days. The performance of the last 180 days takes place in the reverse order of the first 180 days.

Number of days involved:¹¹

1	1	150	24	1	3	=180 days
<i>Visuvant</i> or the central day (not counted)						
3	1	24	120	30	1	=180 days
Total						360 days

The whole sacrifice is divided into two distinct parts, each consisting of six months of thirty days each, in the midst of both lies the *Visuvant* day, i.e. the equator or central day, dividing the whole *satra* into two equal halves. The ceremonies in both the six monthly halves are the same with the only difference that they are performed in an inverted order in the latter half.

—Dr. Jogiraj Basu, *India of the Age of the Brahmanas*
(Calcutta, 1969) pp. 162-163

The middle day of the annual *satra* is called the *Vishuvan* day, and it is expressly stated that this central day divides the *satra* into two equal halves, in the same way as the *Vishuvan* or the equinoctial day divides the year. The *satra* was thus the imitation of the year in every respect, and originally it must have corresponded exactly with the course of the year. Now as *Vishuvan* literally means the time when

11. Names of sacrifices omitted

day and night are of equal length... the year must have commenced with the equinoxes.

—Orion pp. 21-22

SEASONS

Shatapatha Brahmana (II. I. 3, 1-3)...in describing the aforesaid paths (*devayana* and *pitriyana*) lays down in distinct terms that *vasanta*, *grishma*, and *varsha* are the seasons of the *devas*; *sharad*, *hemanta* and *shishira* those of the *pitris*. When he (the sun) turns to the north, he is amongst the *devas* and protects them; when he turns to the south he is amongst the *pitris* and protects them.

—Orion p. 25

We must, therefore, hold that *devayana* in those days was understood to extend over the six months of the year which comprised the three seasons of spring, summer, and rains *i. e.* from the vernal to the autumnal equinox, when the sun was in the northern hemisphere or to the north of the equator...

The old order of seasons given in the passage above quoted...clearly states that *vasanta* in old days commenced with the vernal equinox. We can now understand why *vasanta* has been spoken of as the first season.

—Orion, p. 26

The above may be summarized as under :

Devayana consisted of three seasons : *Vasanta*, *Grishma* and *Varsha* and commenced with the vernal equinox.

Pitriyana consisted of three seasons : *Sharad*, *Hemanta* and *Shishira* and commenced with the autumnal equinox.

NAKSHATRAS

In the *Taittiriya Brahmana* (I. 5. 2.7) it is stated that "the Nakshatras are the houses of gods...the Nakshatras of the

Devas begin with the Krittikas and end with Vishakha, whereas the Nakshatras of Yama begin with the Anuradhas and end with the Apa-bharanis." —Orion p. 43

Deva Nakshatras

Krittika
Rohini
Mriga-shirsha
Ardra
Punarvasu
Pushya
Ashlesha
Magha
Purva Phalguni
Uttara Phalguni
Hasta
Chitra
Swati
Vishakha

*Yama Nakshatras*¹²

Anuradha
Jyeshtha
Mula
Purva Ashadha
Uttara Ashadha
Shravana
Dhanishtha
Sathabhishag
Purva Bhadrapada
Uttara Bhadrapada
Revati
Aswini
Bharani

... "I am, therefore, disposed to think that the principle of the division in this case is the same as that followed in the case of the *devayana* and the *pitriyana* discussed before."

—Orion p. 43

In other words, Deva Nakshatras correspond with *devayana* and Yama Nakshatras with *pitriyana*, thus dividing the whole circle of stars in two equal groups.

"The Nakshatras of the Devas were counted from the vernal to the autumnal equinox, ..and conversely in the case of the Nakshatras of Yama."

—Orion p. 45

12. List of Nakshatras incorporated for clarification. The names in *Taittiriya Brahmana* slightly differ.

Bentley¹³...suggests that the word *Vishakha* may mean "possessed of two branches," and these two branches may have been caused by the equinoctial colure bisecting the zodiacal portion of the *Vishakhas*. Now the equinoctial colure passing through the beginning of the divisional *Krittikas* naturally bisects the zodiacal portion of the *Vishakha*. Bentley, therefore, concludes... that this was position of the colure when *Vishakha* received its name.

—*Orion* p. 59

Tilak calls it "etymological conjecture" and "an ingenious hypothesis," but due to lack of Vedic evidence rejects it. (*Orion* pp. 60-61) However, I find no reason to differ from Bentley; *Vishakha* occupies the same position in *Nakshatras* as *Vishuvan* in annual *satras*.¹⁴ We may put it in this way : $13+1+13=27$ Nakshatras.

Krittikas are *Pleiades* in constellation *Taurus* (Bull) and *Anuradha* is part of the constellation *Scorpio* (Scorpion).

From it we may infer that this division of *nakshatras* dates from the time when vernal equinox was in *Taurus* and autumnal equinox in *Scorpio*. With *Krittikas* (*Pleiades*)¹⁵ began the day of the gods (*devayana*) and with *Anuradha* their night (*pitriyana*).

13. *Historical View of Hindu Astronomy* p. 2

14. For details please see *Arctic Home in the Vedas* pp. 191-2 and its summary on p. 27 of this article.

15. "Albiruni, in his *Chronology of Ancient Nations* observes that other nations begin their asterisms with the *Pleiades*. He further states that he has found in some books of *Hermes* that the vernal equinox coincides with the rising of *Pleiades*."

—*Orion* p. 58. f. n.

TESTIMONY OF SURYA-SIDDHANTA

Mount Meru is the terrestrial North Pole of our astronomers, and the *Surya-Siddhanta*, XII, 67, says: "At Meru gods behold the sun after but a *single rising* during the half of his revolution beginning with Aries." Now according to Puranas Meru is the home or seat of all the gods, and the statement about their half-year long night and day is thus easily and naturally explained; and all astronomers and divines have accepted the accuracy of the explanation. The day of the gods corresponds with the passage of the sun from the vernal to the autumnal equinox, when the sun is visible at the North Pole, or the Meru; and the night with the southern passage of sun, from the autumnal back to the vernal equinox.

—*Arctic Home in the Vedas* p. 62

The old meaning of *uttarayana*, literally, the northern passage of the sun, was the period of time required by the sun to travel from the vernal to the autumnal equinox, or the portion of the ecliptic in the northern hemisphere; and if we understand the word in this sense, the statement that the *uttarayana* is a day of *devas* is at once plain and intelligible

—*Ibid* p. 63

It is noteworthy that vernal equinox was in Gemini as per *Rig Veda*, in Taurus as per *Taittiriya Brahmana*, and in Aries as per *Surya-Siddhanta*. On this basis astronomers can very well calculate the correct dates for the compilation of these works. The old calculations deserve a thorough revision and correction.

BHASKARACHARYA'S DILEMMA

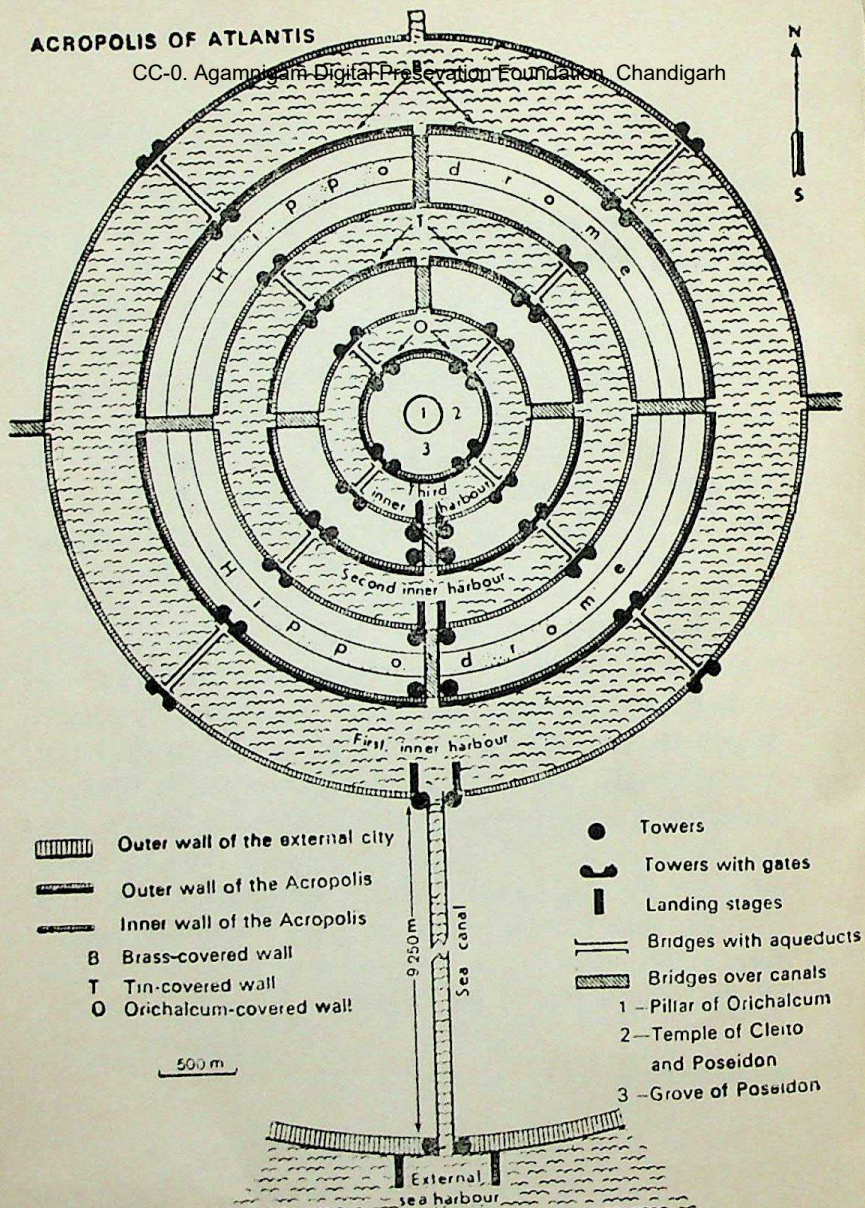
Bhaskaracharya was at a loss to correctly understand the tradition that the *uttarayana* was the day of *devas*. In his *Siddhanta-Shiromani* he raises the question how the *uttarayana*, as it was generally understood in his day, could be the day of the *devas*. He admits that the celestial beings on Meru at the North Pole behold the sun (during all the six months) when he is in the northern hemisphere (vii,9) and these six months may therefore be properly called their day. But the word *uttarayana* was then used to denote the period of six months from the winter to the summer solstice; and Bhaskaracharya was unable to understand how such an *uttarayana* could be called the day of the *devas* by the writers of the astronomical Samhitas. Bhaskaracharya could give no satisfactory solution of the difficulty, and asks his readers to reconcile the conflicting statements on the supposition that the doctrine may be regarded as referring to "judicial astrology and the fruits it foretells." Had Bhaskaracharya however known that the word *uttarayana* was sometimes used for *devayana* to denote the passage of the sun from the vernal to the autumnal equinox, I am sure, he would not have asked us to be satisfied with the lame explanation that the doctrine of the Samhita-writers need not be mathematically correct as it refers exclusively to judicial astrology.

—Orion pp. 28-30



ACROPOLIS OF ATLANTIS

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3

ATLANTIS THE VANISHED NORTH POLAR ISLAND

It was Plato who first described the rise and fall of Atlantis in great detail in two of his dialogues *Timaeus* and *Critias* in the fourth century B. C. Since then thousands of books and articles have been written in western languages about the lost continent. The aim of all these books and articles has been to locate Atlantis and to show its impact on human culture. There is no doubt that the problem of Atlantis has been a challenge to human intellect. Explorers and archaeologists have devoted their lives and spent their fortunes to discover archaeological evidence in support of its existence. They have ransacked the depths of the Atlantic Ocean, explored and excavated various sites in different countries of Africa, Europe, Asia and America, but all have miserably failed to turn up a single piece of concrete evidence to prove the existence of Atlantis. Under the circumstances, should we regard Atlantis as a myth fabricated by Plato or should we regard it as a misinterpreted reality? The fact is that both the propositions are partly true. In my opinion the exact spot that deserves

thorough exploration is the Arctic Ocean at the North Pole. How I arrived at this conclusion is explained below :

The problem of Atlantis came to my notice while studying *Paradise Found : The Cradle of the Human Race at the North Pole* by Dr. William F. Warren.¹ He writes :

“Plato’s story of lost Atlantis, the island which the ocean-god Poseidon prepared for his son Atlas to rule over, is a fascinating picture of the antediluvian world. Whether originating in Egypt, as claimed by Plato, or inherited as a part of the legendary wealth of the Hellenes, it is of special interest to us in the present discussion; and this for three reasons :

First, we have elsewhere shown that in oldest Greek thought Atlas belongs to the North Pole, and it is only reasonable to locate the Kingdom of Atlas in the same locality.

Secondly, some authorities have unconsciously placed Atlantis in just this polar position by identifying its inhabitants with the “Hyperboreans”.²

Thirdly, Apollodorus and Theopompus expressly call the lost land Meropia, and its inhabitants Meropes : *i.e.*, according to the above authorities, ‘issued from Meru’.

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1. Published by Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, London, 1885.
 2. “Pindar manifestly makes them (the Hyperboreans) the same as the Atlantians”.—Bryant, *Analysis of Ancient Mythology*, Vol. V, p. 157, quoted by Warren on p. 185.

The fabled country further resembles Eden in the difficulties which scholarship of every kind has found in giving it a location in harmony with all the data. These difficulties are so great that some learned writers have located it as far to the West as America, others as far to the East as in the Sea of Azof, or in Persia. Even of those who have sought a place for it in the mid-Atlantic, some have pushed it up and some down, until one of the latest writers says: "All hypotheses are permissible." His illustrious countryman, Monsieur J. S. Bailly,³ a century ago, came nearer the truth, when, in view of the perplexities attending all other locations, he correctly placed his lost Atlantis in the Paleo-Arctic Ocean." (pp. 184-186)

It is surprising that while writing these remarkable lines it did not occur to Dr. Warren that there could be an island at the North Pole in prehistoric times. On the other hand, these very lines have led me to the conclusion that Atlantis was an island at the North Pole, which had submerged before the dawn of history.

I feel that before anybody attempts to find the relics of Atlantis in the Atlantic Ocean or somewhere else, he or she should first of all study the dialogues of Plato critically to find out what he had to say in the matter. On account of limitation of space I reproduce only the most relevant portions of the dialogues. The extracts reproduced here

3. Bailly, Jean Sylvain, (1736-93). French astronomer, author of *Lettres sur l' Origine des Sciences* (1777) and *Lettres sur l' Atlantide de Platon* (1779).

are from Jowett's translation of *Timaeus*⁴ :

"Then listen, Socrates, to a tale which, though strange, is certainly true, having been attested by Solon, who was the wisest of the seven sages...

In the Egyptian Delta, at the head of which the river Nile divides, there is a certain district which is called the district of Sais, and the great city of the district is also called Sais, and is the city from which King Amasis came. To this city came Solon, and was received there with great honour; he asked the priests who were most skilful in such matters, about antiquity. Thereupon one of the priests, who was of a very great age, said : O Solon.. Many great and wonderful deeds are recorded of your state in our histories. But one of them exceeds all the rest in greatness and valour. For these histories tell of a mighty power which unprovoked made an expedition against the whole of Europe and Asia, and to which your city put an end. This power came forth out of the Atlantic Ocean, for in those days the Atlantic was navigable; and there was an island situated in front of the straits which are by you called the pillars of Heracles; the island was larger than Libya and Asia put together... Now in this island of Atlantis there was a great and wonderful empire which had rule over the whole island and several others, and over parts of the continent, and, furthermore, the men of Atlantis had subjected the parts of Libya within the columns of Heracles as far as Egypt, and of Europe as far as Tyrrhenia. This vast

4. *The Dialogues of Plato*, translated by B. Jowett (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1892) Vol. III, pp. 441-46.

power, gathered into one, endeavoured to subdue at a blow our country and yours and the whole of region within the straits; and then, Solon, your country shone forth, in the excellence of her virtue and strength, among all mankind. She was pre-eminent in courage and military skill, and was the leader of the Hellenes. And when the rest fell off from her, being compelled to stand alone, after having undergone the very extremity of danger, she defeated and triumphed over the invaders, and preserved from slavery those who were not yet subjugated, and generously liberated all the rest of us who dwell within the pillars. But afterwards there occurred violent earthquakes and floods; and in a single day and night of misfortune all your warlike men in a body sank into the earth, and the island of Atlantis in like manner disappeared in the depth of the sea. For which reason the sea in those parts is impassable and impenetrable, because there is a shoal of mud in the way; and this was caused by the subsidence of the island."

The readers would be astonished to learn that :

1. Plato's story is not Egyptian in origin. So far as I know, no reference to it has been made in ancient Egyptian literature. I will show after a few pages that the idea of Atlantis was inspired by Hindu cosmology.
2. Atlantis was not in the Atlantic Ocean but at the North Pole.
3. Atlantis was not larger than Libya (North-West

Africa) and Asia (Asia Minor) put together. It was only a small island.

4. Atlanteans neither ruled Europe, Asia and Africa, nor attacked them.
5. There was no war between Atlanteans and Athenians.

I fail to understand why the virtuous Athenians were condemned to sink in a body into the earth. The victor and vanquished should not have met the same end. It is against the theme of victory of good over evil. The story narrated in *Timaeus* is therefore mere fiction and should be regarded as such.

After dismissing the version of *Timaeus*, I reproduce some important extracts from Plato's other famous dialogue, *Critias*⁵ :

"In the days of old, the gods had the whole earth distributed among them by allotment...and Poseidon, receiving for his lot the island of Atlantis, begat children by a mortal woman, and settled them in a part of the island, which I will describe. Looking towards the sea, but in the centre of the whole island, there was a plain which is said to have been the fairest of all plains and very fertile. Near the plain again, and also in the centre of the island at a distance of about fifty stadia, there was a mountain not very high on any side. In this mountain there dwelt one of the

5. *The Dialogues of Plato*, translated by B. Jowett (Oxford, 1892) Vol. III pp. 530-43

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earthborn primeval men of that country, whose name was Evenor, and he had a wife named Leucippe, and they had an only daughter who was called Cleito. The maiden had already reached womanhood, when her father and mother died; Poseidon fell in love with her and had intercourse with her and breaking the ground, inclosed the hill in which she dwelt all round, making alternate zones of sea and land larger and smaller, encircling one another; there were two of land and three of water, which he turned as with a lathe, each having its circumference equidistant every way from the centre, so that no man could get to the island, for ships and voyages were not as yet. He himself, being a god, found no difficulty in making special arrangements for the centre island, bringing up two springs of water from beneath the earth, one of warm water and the other of cold, and making every variety of food to spring up abundantly from the soil. He also begat and brought up five pairs of twin male children; and dividing the island of Atlantis into ten portions, he gave to the first-born of the eldest pair his mother's dwelling and the surrounding allotment, which was the largest and best, and made him king over the rest; the others he made princes, and gave them rule over many men, and a large territory. And he named them all; the eldest, who was the first king, he named Atlas, and after him the whole island and the ocean were called Atlantic...

And they arranged the whole country in the following manner :

...The entire circuit of the wall, which went round the outermost zone, they covered with a coating of brass, and

the circuit of the next wall they coated with tin, and the third, which encompassed the citadel, flashed with the red light of orichalcum. The palaces in the interior of the citadel were constructed in this wise :—In the centre was a holy temple dedicated to Cleito and Poseidon, which remained inaccessible, and was surrounded by an enclosure of gold; this was the spot where the family of the ten princes first saw the light, and thither the people annually brought the fruits of the earth in their season from all the ten portions, to be an offering to each of the ten...

In the next place, they had fountains, one of cold and another of hot water, in gracious plenty flowing...Of the water which ran off they carried some to the grove of Poseidon, where were growing all manner of trees of wonderful height and beauty, owing to the excellence of the soil...

As to the offices and honours, the following was the arrangement from the first. Each of the ten kings in his own division and in his own city had the absolute control of the citizens, and, in most cases of the laws, punishing and slaying whomsoever he would. Now the order of precedence among them and their mutual relations were regulated by the commands of Poseidon which the law had handed down. These were inscribed by the first kings on a pillar of orichalcum, which was situated in the middle of the island at the temple of Poseidon, whither the kings were gathered together every fifth and every sixth year alternately, thus giving equal honour to the odd and to the even number. And when they were gathered together they

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 consulted about their common interests, and enquired if any one had transgressed in anything, and passed judgement, and before they passed judgement they gave their pledges to one another on this wise :—There were bulls who had the range of temple of Poseidon; and the ten kings, being left alone in the temple, after they had offered prayers to the god that they might capture the victim which was acceptable to him, hunted the bulls, without weapons, but with staves and nooses; and the bull which they caught they led up to the pillar and cut its throat over the top of it so that the blood fell upon the sacred inscription...

For many generations, as long as the divine nature lasted in them, they were obedient to the laws, and well-affectioned towards the god, whose seed they were; for they possessed true and in every way great spirits, uniting gentleness with wisdom in the various chances of life, and in their intercourse with one another.. but when the divine portion began to fade away, and became diluted too often and too much with the mortal admixture, and the human nature got the upper hand, they then, being unable to bear their fortune, behaved unseemly, and to him who had an eye to see, grew visibly debased, for they were losing the fairest of their precious gifts; but to those who had no eye to see the true happiness, they appeared glorious and blessed at the very time when they were full of avarice and unrighteous power. Zeus, the god of gods, who rules according to law, and is able to see into such things, perceiving that an honourable race was in a woeful plight, and wanting to inflict punishment on them, that they might be chastened and improve, collected all the

gods into their most holy habitation,⁶ which being placed in the centre of the world, beholds all created things. And when he had called them together, he spake as follows:"

Here the story abruptly ends. Plato left it unfinished. Keeping in view the end of Atlantis as described in *Timaeus*, we may infer that Zeus, in the council of gods, gave verdict against the Atlanteans and according to his decision Atlantis and its impious population sank to the bottom of the ocean after violent earthquakes and floods. According to Plato this cataclysm occurred 9000 years ago.

HINDU ORIGIN

The story of Atlantis is in fact a combination of the creation and deluge myths, which owe their origin to emergence and submergence of the hypothetical North Polar Island. To confine his mortal wife in seclusion Poseidon divided the *earth* into alternate zones of land and water; there were three zones of land and three of water. Subsequently, he made ten zones of land and ten of water, encircling one another alternately. This arrangement was necessary for distributing the *earth* amongst his ten sons. This tenfold division of earth and the central position of Atlantis would be clear from the following description of Children's *Britannica* :

"In the story Plato tells, Atlantis was really several islands, one inside another. In the centre was one island with a ring of water round it; then came a ring

6. Summit of Mt. Olympus or the circumpolar sky. Mt. Olympus was the same as the Mt. Meru of the Hindus i.e. the North Polar Mountain.

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 of land, then another ring of water round that, and so on. Altogether there were nine rings of land and nine of water. Atlantis had been given to the sea-god Neptune (Greek Poseidon), and there he lived with Cleito, his beloved. They had ten sons, five sets of twins. In the Plato's story, one of the sons, called Atlas, became king of the central island, while the other nine each ruled over one of the nine outside rings of land."

—*Children's Britannica* (London, 1960, 1961) Vol. I, p. 337.

The idea of dividing the circular *earth* into alternate zones of land and water was borrowed by Plato from the Hindus, as would be evident from the following extract from *Vishnu Purana* (Book II, Chapter I) :

"*Maitreya*.—You have related to me, venerable preceptor, most fully, all that I was curious to hear respecting the creation of the world. But there is a part of the subject which I am desirous again to have described. You stated that Priyavrata and Uttanapada were the sons of the Swayambhuva (Manu); and you repeated the story of Dhruva, the son of Uttanapada. You made no mention of the descendants of Priyavrata : and it is an account of his family that I beg you will kindly communicate to me.

Parasara.—Priyavrata married Kama, the daughter of the patriarch Kardama, and had, by her, two daughters, Samraj and Kukshi, and ten sons, wise, valiant, modest and dutiful, named Agnidhra, Agnibahu, Vapushmat, Dyutimat, Medhas, Medhatithi, Bhavya, Savana, Putra; and the tenth was Jyotishmat, illustrious by nature, as by name. These were

the sons of Priyavrata,—famous for strength and prowess. Of these, three, or Medha, Agnibahu, and Putra, adopted a religious life. Remembering the occurrences of a prior existence, they did not covet dominion, but diligently practised the rites of devotion in due season, wholly disinterested, and looking for no reward.

Priyavrata, having divided the earth into seven continents, gave them respectively, to his other seven sons.* To Agnidhra he gave Jambu-dwipa; to Medhatithi he gave Plaksha-dwipa; he installed Vapushmat in the sovereignty over the Dwipa of Salmali, and made Jyotishmat king of Kusa-dwipa; he appointed Dyutimat to rule over Krauncha-dwipa. Bhavya, to reign over Saka-dwipa; and Savana he nominated the monarch of the Dwipa of Pushkara."

*"According to the *Bhagavata*, he drove his chariot seven times round the earth; and the ruts left by the wheels became the beds of the oceans, separating it into seven Dwipas."

—*Works* by H.H. Wilson (London: Trubner & Co., 1865)
Vol. VII pp. 99-101.

It is significant that Poseidon and Priyavrata both had ten male children. Three sons of Priyavrata embraced an ascetic life, so seven were left to rule the earth.

Seven is a sacred number and owes its origin to the constellations of the Great Bear (*Ursa Major*) and the Little Bear (*Ursa Minor*), each consisting of seven prominent stars.

Poseidon makes alternate zones of land and water,

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 encircling one another as if they were turned with a lathe.
 Priyavrata employs a chariot for the same purpose.

The chariot of Priyavrata was the constellation of the Great Bear. The same idea is conveyed by its old English name 'Charles's wain'. Its revolution round the Pole Star inspired the idea of driving a chariot seven times round the earth.

Priyavrata was *chakravartin* (monarch of the world), and father of thirteen children,⁷ (of ten according to another version). To me it appears to be an astronomical myth, based on the personification of seven stars of Little Bear and seven of Great Bear. Pole star, which belongs to the constellation of Little Bear, was personified as Priyavrata. So, the remaining thirteen stars were naturally personified as his children.

The seven rulers of the seven concentric islands were the seven stars of the Great Bear personified. (It is significant that in Persian the constellation of Great Bear is called *haftaurang*, which means 'seven thrones'.)

Jambu-dwipa was the North Polar Island and its ruler Agnidhra⁸ was the personification of the North Polar Mountain, an active volcano, called Meru by the Hindus.

7. "Priyavrata, by the wheel of whose car the Earth was divided into seven continents, had thirteen male children. Six of these embraced an ascetic life; the rest ruled the seven divisions of the Earth." Dr. Warren, *Paradise Found* (London, 1885) p. 459.

8. Perhaps *Agnidhara* which means "bearing fire." It supports my contention that the North Polar Mountain was volcanic in origin.

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 8. Perhaps *Agnidhara* which means "bearing fire." It supports my contention that the North Polar Mountain was volcanic in origin.

In short, Atlantis was Jambu-dwipa and its king, Atlas, corresponds to Agnidhra.

In the very heart of Atlantis there was a hill towering over the fertile plain. We may compare it to Mount Meru, which was also in the centre of Jambu-dwipa.

SYMBOLISM OF THE PILLAR

In the centre of Atlantis there was a holy temple dedicated to Cleito and Poseidon. It was surrounded by a beautiful garden, called the grove of Poseidon. In the temple there was a pillar of orichalcum on which were inscribed the commands of Poseidon. This reminds us of the famous Ashokan pillar. Both of them symbolized the axis of the earth. This pillar in the middle of island marked the exact centre or the navel of the earth and leaves no doubt about the North Polar location of Atlantis.

Before passing judgement according to the commands of Poseidon, the kings of Atlantis used to sacrifice a chosen bull. They led the bull "to the pillar and cut its throat over the top of it so that the blood fell upon the sacred inscription." Thus the Atlantean pillar of laws was also regarded as a sacrificial post, which also symbolizes the axis of the earth.

SYMBOLISM OF THE WHEEL

According to mythical geography of the Hindus, in Jambu-dwipa there were four rivers coinciding with the four cardinal points. We may compare them with the four rivers of Paradise or Garden of Eden, which was another

name for the North Polar Island. This island of four rivers was graphically represented as a wheel of four spokes. Later on, eight cardinal points were recognized and were represented as a wheel of eight spokes. This wheel pattern of Atlantis is discernible in the diagram facing page 33, where four rivers of Jambu-dwipa have been replaced by four canals for navigation and four aqueducts coinciding with the cardinal points.

POSEIDON AND ATLAS

According to Plato, Atlas was the eldest son of the ocean-god, Poseidon, and the king of the central island of Atlantis.

Poseidon was the Arctic Ocean personified and his son, Atlas, was naturally the personification of North Polar Mountain, which emerged from the Arctic Ocean.

The first book of Homer's *Odyssey* states that Atlas, "knows the sea in all its depths and with his own shoulders supports the great columns that hold earth and sky apart."⁹ In other words, he is the personification of the World Pillar or axis of the earth, which coincided with or passed through the North Polar Mountain.

According to Greek mythology, Atlas was one of the giants (Titans) who rebelled against the gods. When the giants were defeated, Atlas was condemned to uphold the sky on his shoulders by Zeus, king of the gods (Pole Star personified). Later, Atlas was transformed into a mountain,

9. Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated by E. V. Rieu, (Penguin Books, 1979), p. 26.

when Perseus mercifully on his request showed him the Gorgon Medusa's head, to relieve him of his everlasting burden.

Originally, Atlas was portrayed as a towering giant who supported the sky. Later, he was depicted as bearing the earth on his shoulders, and we continue to find him as such on the covers of old atlases (collections of maps named after him).

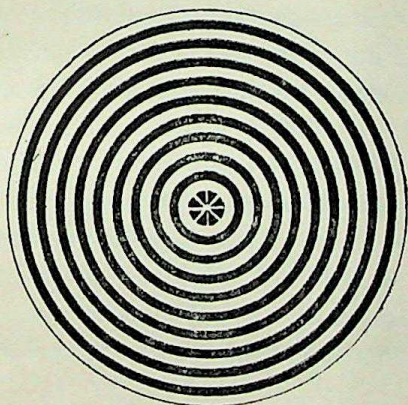
Mount Atlas in North-West Africa was named after Atlas, the giant sky-bearer, and was identified with the North Polar Mountain. In the same way, the ocean beyond Gibraltar was named Atlantic Ocean after the lost Atlantis (which was at the North Pole).

AN APPEAL TO SCIENTISTS

I hope I have adduced strong evidence to prove the Hindu origin of Plato's story. Atlantis was not a continent, but a small volcanic island at the North Pole, which submerged long ago. It was the birth-place of civilization and the fountain-head of religion and, as such, deserves a thorough investigation by geologists and oceanographers. It is only they who can prove or disprove the existence of a volcanic island at the North Pole in remote antiquity. By diverting their attention and efforts from the Atlantic Ocean and other places to Arctic Ocean, they can solve a riddle of the ages.



Seven Concentric Islands
Jambu-dwipa in the centre
—*Hindu concept*



Ten Concentric Islands
Atlantis in the centre
—*Greek concept*

Inference : Atlantis = Jambu-dwipa

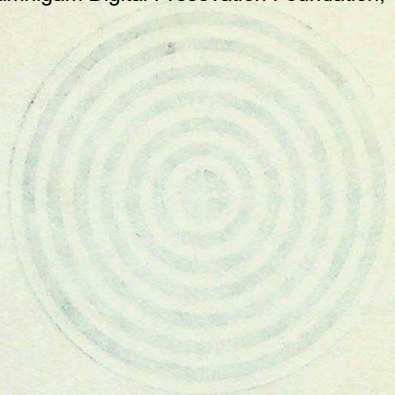


Figure 1: A circular diagram consisting of many concentric rings, resembling a target or a ripple in water. The rings are evenly spaced and cover the entire circle.

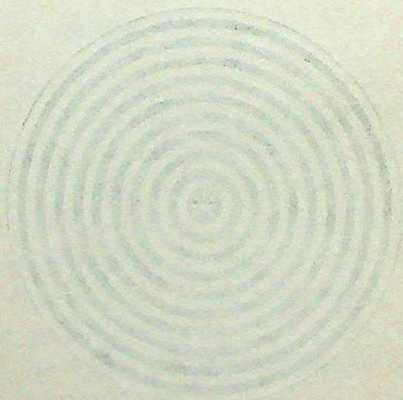


Figure 2: A circular diagram consisting of many concentric rings, resembling a target or a ripple in water. The rings are evenly spaced and cover the entire circle.

Figure 3: A circular diagram consisting of many concentric rings, resembling a target or a ripple in water. The rings are evenly spaced and cover the entire circle.

4

MYSTERY OF MERU THE MOUNTAIN OF GOLD

Mount Meru occupies pivotal position in the mythical geography of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains. It is the axis of the universe and all the heavenly bodies revolve around it. Hindu astronomical works *Surya-Siddhanta* and *Siddhanta-Shiromani* explicitly state that Meru is at the North Pole. As such, it cannot be identified with a mountain located elsewhere. According to Captain F. Wilford, the renowned authority on mythical geography, it is situated "on the elevated plains of Tartary and in the latitude of forty-five degrees."¹ E.B. Havell, the famous exponent of Indian Art, identified it with the Himalayas,² and the late Dr. S. Muzafar Ali, Professor of Geography, University of Saugar, Sagar, with the plateau of Pamir.³ These identifications are obviously wrong.

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1. Captain F. Wilford, *Asiatick Researches*. (Calcutta, 1805) Vol. VII, p. 286.
 2. E. B. Havell, *The Himalayas in Indian Art*. London, John Murray, 1924.
 3. S. M. Ali, *The Geography of the Puranas*. People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 2nd. Ed. 1973.

At present there is no mountain at the North Pole. But this does not mean that it never existed. Perhaps it was a volcano which submerged in the Arctic Ocean and there is sufficient evidence to support this assumption.

Mount Meru was supposed to be made of pure gold. Since gold is equated with fire in Hindu symbolism, I infer that Meru was a volcano. It stood at the centre of Jambudwipa, which I interpret as a submerged island at the North Pole. On its summit grew a gigantic Jambu (rose-apple) tree. In my view there was actually no tree growing on its summit. It was only the smoke which appeared to shoot up from the crater of the volcano like a tree which overshadowed the island. (This idea occurred to me when I was reading translation of a letter of Pliny "the Younger" addressed to Tacitus, wherein he vividly describes the eruption of Mount Vesuvius (AD 79) and compares the smoke rising from the volcano to a pine tree. The translation is reproduced on p. 63.) This is the origin of the "tree on the mount" symbol, found on the ancient seals of Mesopotamia and punch-marked coins of India. Jambu tree appears as the Tree of Life or the Tree of Knowledge in the Bible. It is the Bodhi tree of the Buddhists and ash Yggdrasil of the Nordics. Mount Meru may be compared with Kharsak Kurra of the Sumerians/Akkadians, Kwen-lun of the Chinese, Olympus of the Greeks, Hara berezaiti of the Iranians and Mountain of God of the Jews.

The oldest reference to Mount Meru is in the *Taittiriya Aranyaka* I, 7, 1, wherein we find "Meru described as the seat of seven Adityas, while the eighth Aditya, called Kashyapa, is said never to leave the great Meru or Mahameru. Kashyapa is further described as communicating light to the

seven Adityas, and he himself perpetually illumining the great mountain."⁴

As Mount Meru was at the North Pole, Kashyapa must be the Pole Star, (which remains fixed) and the seven Adityas, seven stars of *Ursa Major* (Great Bear), also personified as Sapta-Rishis.

There is no unanimity about the shape of Meru. It is generally described as a column which unites the sky to the earth. We may compare this idea to *Skambha* (World-Pillar) of Atharva-Veda (X.7). This shows its connection with the axis of the earth and also explains its immense height (84,000 yojanas according to *Puranas*). According to Atri, Meru had a hundred angles and according to Bhrigu and Varshayani, a thousand. I interpret these angles as corrugated ridges produced by the flow of lava. My contention gains support from the fact that "Galava makes it saucer-shaped; Garga, twisted, like braided hair."⁵ The 'saucer-shaped' definitely refers to its crater.

On the summit of Meru is the vast city of Brahma. Around it, in the directions of cardinal points and the intermediate quarters, are situated the magnificent cities of Indra and the other regents (eight *lokapalas*). This shows that Meru was regarded as the abode of the gods.

If my contention (*i.e.* Meru was a mountain at the North Pole) is correct, then Brahma must be a personification of the Pole Star, comparable to An or Anu of the Sumerians/Akkadians, Zeus of the Greeks, Jupiter of the Romans, Ahura Mazda of the Iranians. This has led me to the conclusion

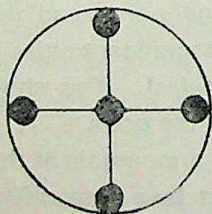
4. B. G. Tilak, *Arctic Home in the Vedas* (Poona, 1956), p. 65.

5. H. H. Wilson, *Vishnu Purana, Works*. (London: Trubner & Co., 1865) Vol. VII, p. 113.

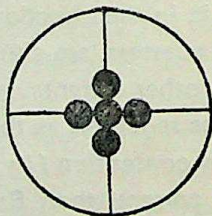
that the idea of one God (Monotheism) was inspired by the Pole Star and this is the reason why the North Polar Mountain (Meru) was regarded as the Mountain of God. My idea is supported by the author of *Dictionary of Symbols*.⁶ Under the caption "Mountain" we read :

"Mount Meru is said to be of gold and located at the North Pole, thus underlining the idea of the centre and, in particular linking it with the Pole star."

According to *Vishnu Purana* (see p. 59) Mount Meru is supported by four buttress mountains. It appears that originally the sky was supposed to be supported by only one huge mountain at the centre of the earth. Subsequently, four mountains were added at the cardinal points, located at the end of the earth's disc near the horizon, as we find in the ancient Chinese cosmology. In the *Puranas* these four mountains have been transferred from the end of the earth (at the cardinal points) to the centre and grouped around Meru, as illustrated below :



Chinese



Hindu

Five Mountains

As symbolism of cardinal points played a vital role in ancient religions, these mountains were supposed to be of

6. J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*. (London, 1962) p. 209.

four colours. These four colours were later on transferred to the four sides of Meru.

According to one account Sumeru⁷ is a four-sided pillar, sparkling with sides made of crystal, gold, ruby and emerald, the colours of the world's four quarters. Amaravati 'Seat of the Immortals', the palace of the king of the gods, Indra, rests upon it.⁸

"The *Vayu (Purana)* represents it as having four sides of different colours, or white on the East, yellow on the South, black on the West, and red on the North..."⁹

This symbolism of cardinal points was gradually extended to include:

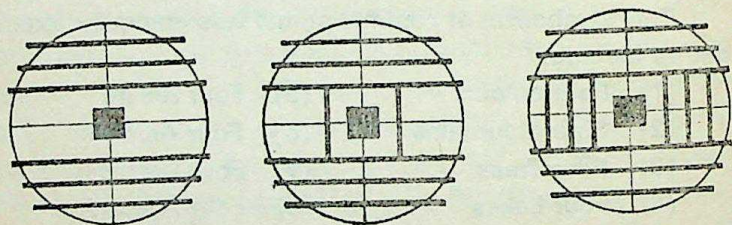
- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| (1) Four colours | (5) Four Rivers |
| (2) Four Mountains | (6) Four Animals |
| (3) Four Trees | (7) Four Castes |
| (4) Four Lakes | (8) Four Avatars |

It is not possible for me here to explain each and every aspect of this fanciful geography, for which the *Puranas* must be studied. In short, each of the above four mountains is a replica of Meru, having a lake, a tree and a garden at its top. This garden is the Garden of God, the tree is the Tree of Life and the lake, the Fountain of Youth or Fountain of Life.

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7. Sumeru is another well-known name of Meru, The prefix *su* means 'good' or 'beautiful'.
 8. C. G. Jung and C. Kerenyi, *Essays on a Science of Mythology* (Harper Torchbook/The Bollingen Library, Harper & Row, Publishers, New York and Evanston, 1963) p. 13.
Amaravati is a variant of the city of Brahma, situated at the summit of Meru, comparable to Asgard of the Nordics.
 9. H. H. Wilson, *Vishnu Purana, Works*. (London : Trubner & Co., 1865) Vol. VII, p. 113.

Here the idea of lake requires some clarification. It refers to that stage of Meru (a volcano) when it became dormant and its crater was turned into a lake.¹⁰ This was the original Manas-Sarovar (associated with Brahma). The lake of the same name in Himalayas is its substitute.

Originally, the earth (Jambu-dwipa) consisted of seven mountains and seven varshas (divisions). Later on, for reasons of symmetry, their number was raised to nine and subsequently, the mountains were increased to thirteen to fill up the gaps on the east and west side of the earth's disc.



Of all the varshas and mountains of Jambu-dwipa, mentioned in the *Vishnu Purana*, only the following can be identified with certainty:

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|----------------------|
| (1) Bharata Varsha | = | India |
| (2) Himavat | = | Himalayas |
| (3) Ilavrita Varsha | = | North Polar Island |
| (4) Meru | = | North Polar Mountain |
| (5) Uttara Kuru | = | Siberia |

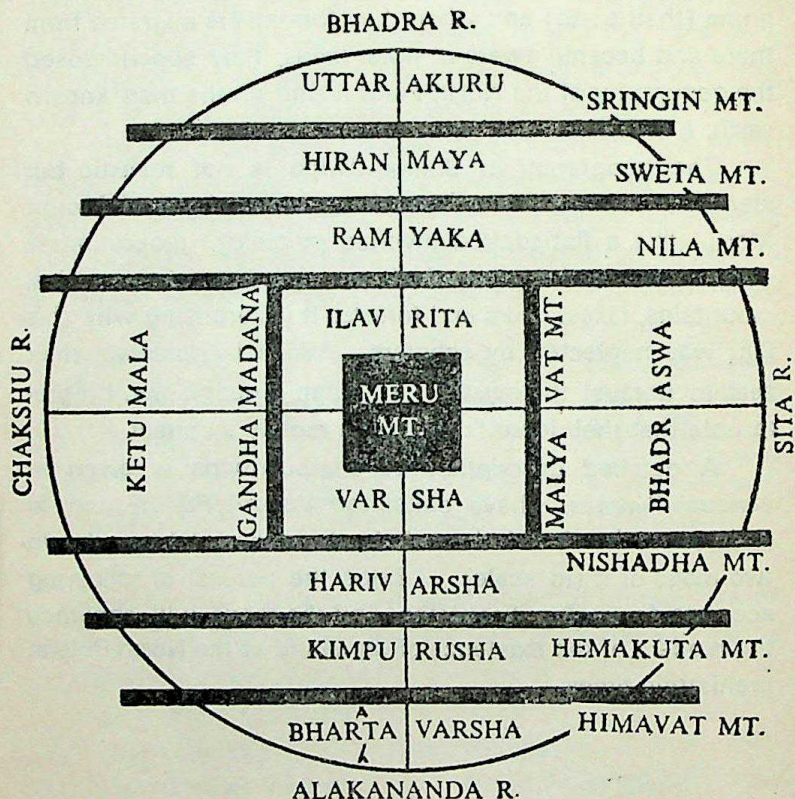
In this system at one end is India and at the other end is Siberia and beyond that, in the Arctic Ocean, the submerged

10. Crater-lake is a sheet of water collected in the crater of an extinct volcano. It is also called caldera. The crater-lake, Oregon, in North America is a well-known example.—W. G. Moore, *A Dictionary of Geography*. (Penguin Books, 1954) pp. 29, 45.

North Polar Island. There is no doubt that the Hindus regarded the submerged North Polar Island as their true home (their earth) and when their forefathers migrated from there and became aware of other lands, they superimposed the geography of the North Polar Island on the then known earth, *i. e.* Asia.

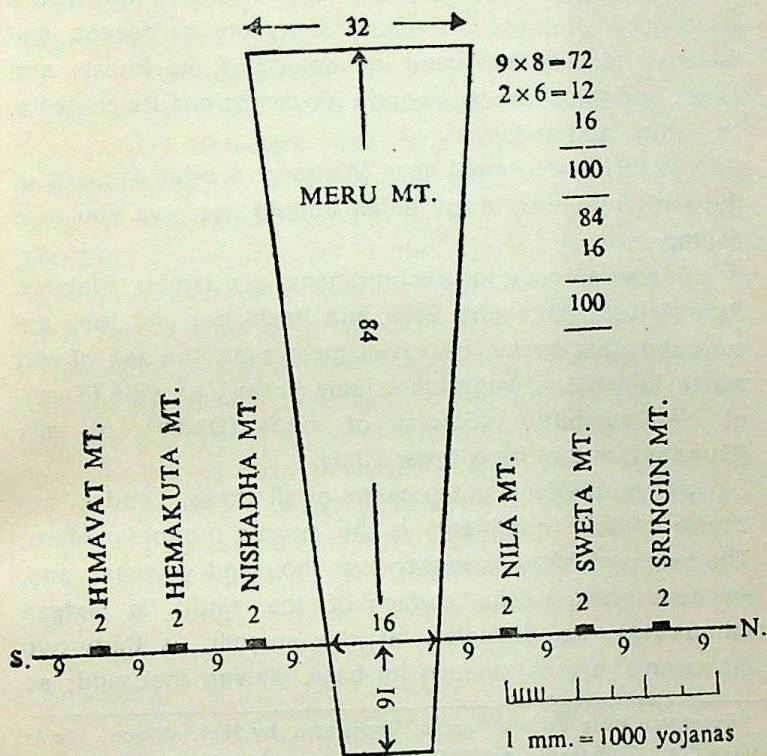
The geography of Jambu-dwipa is not realistic but idealistic. It is evident from the peculiar shape of Mount Meru (like a flat-topped inverted pyramid), proportionate dimensions, and symmetrical arrangement of countries, mountains, lakes, rivers and forests. It is surprising why this fact was neglected by scholars. While I appreciate their zeal to unravel the mystery of Pauranic geography, I regret to note that their identifications are mostly incorrect.

A detailed description of Jambu-dwipa is given in various *Puranas*. I have consulted *Vishnu Purana* and to understand its description of Jambu-dwipa, I have drawn two maps of it (to scale). I hope the perusal of following account, foregoing discussion, and the maps will convince the readers of the existence of an island at the North Pole in prehistoric times.



Jambu-dwipa
According to Vishnu Purana

Scale 1 mm. = 1000 yojanas



Cross Section of Jambu-Dwipa
Seven Mountains from South to North

THE ROSE-APPLE ISLAND

MAITREYA.—You have related to me, Brahman, the creation of Swayambhuva. I am now desirous to hear from you a description of the earth;—how many are its oceans and islands, its kingdoms and its mountains, its forests and rivers, and the cities of the gods, its dimensions, its contents, its nature, and its form.

PARASARA.—You shall hear, Maitreya, a brief account of the earth from me. A full detail I could not give you in a century.

The seven great insular continents are Jambu, Plaksha, Salmali, Kusa, Krauncha, Saka, and Pushkara; and they are surrounded, severally, by seven great seas, the sea of salt water (Lavana), of sugar-cane juice (Ikshu), of wine (Sura), of clarified butter (Sarpis), of curds (Dadhi), of milk (Dugdha), and of fresh water (Jala).

Jambu-dwipa is in the centre of all these. And in the centre of this (continent) is the *golden mountain* Meru. The height of Meru is eighty-four thousand yojanas¹; and, its depth below (the surface of the earth) is sixteen (thousand). Its diameter, at the summit, is thirty-two (thousand yojanas) and, at its base, sixteen thousand; so

*Excerpted from *Vishnu Purana*, Translated by H.H. Wilson, *Works* (London : Trubner & Co. 1865) Vol. VII, pp. 109-125,138.

1. Yojana—a distance traversed in one harnessing or without unyoking, . . . sometimes regarded as equal to 4 or 5 English miles, but more correctly = 4 Krosas or about 9 miles; according to other calculations = $2\frac{1}{2}$ English miles, and according to some = 8 Krosas.

—Sir M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1951) p. 858.

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 that this mountain is like the seed-cup of the lotus of the earth.

The boundary mountains (of the *earth*)² are Himavat, Hemakuta, and Nishadha, which lie south (of Meru); and Nila, Sweta, and Sringin, which are situated to the north (of it). The two central ranges (those next to Meru, or Nishadha and Nila) extend for a hundred thousand (yojanas, running east and west). Each of the others diminishes ten thousand (yojanas, as it lies more remote from the centre). They are two thousand (yojanas) in height, and as many in breadth. The varshas (or countries between these ranges) are : Bharata (India), south of the Himavat mountains; next, Kimpurusha, between Himavat and Hemakuta; north of the latter, and south of Nishadha is Harivarsha; north of Meru is Ramyaka, extending from the Nila, or blue mountains to the Sweta (or white) mountains; Hiranmaya lies between the Sweta and Sringin ranges; and Uttarakuru is beyond the latter, following the same direction as Bharata. Each of these is nine thousand (yojanas) in extent. Ilavrita is of similar dimensions; but in the centre of it is the golden mountain Meru : and the country extends nine thousand (yojanas) in each direction from the four sides of the mountain.

There are four mountains in this varsha, formed as buttresses to Meru, each ten thousand yojanas in elevation. That on the east is called Mandara; that on the south

2. Jambu-dwipa is the whole earth, not Asia, which is a later interpretation, as we find in the famous phrase *Jambu-dwipa Bharat Khande Aryavarte* i.e. Aryavarta which is in Bharat-Khanda (India) and that in Jambu-dwipa (Asia). The "earth" of mythical geography is the submerged North Polar Island.

Gandhamadana; that on the west, Vipula; and that on the north, Suparswa. On each of these stands, severally, a Kadamba-tree, a Jambu-tree, a Pippala, and a Vata; each spreading over eleven hundred (yojanas, and towering aloft like) banners on the mountains.

From the Jambu-tree the insular continent Jambudwipa derives its appellation. The apples (*phala*) of that tree are as large as elephants. When they are rotten, they fall upon the crest of the mountain; and from their expressed juice is formed the Jambu river, the waters of which are drunk by the inhabitants; and, in consequence of drinking of that stream, they pass their days in content and health, being subject neither to perspiration, to foul odours, to decrepitude nor organic decay. The soil on the banks of the river, absorbing the Jambu juice, and being dried by gentle breezes, becomes the gold termed *Jambunada*,³ (of which) the ornaments of the Siddhas (are fabricated).

The country of Bhadrāswa lies on the east of Meru; and Ketumala, on the west: and between these two is the region of Ilavrita. On the east (of the same) is the forest Chaitraratha; the Gandhamadana (wood) is on the south; (the forest of) Vaibhāja is on the west; and (the grove of) Indra, or) Nandana is on the north. There are also four great lakes, the waters of which are partaken of by the gods, called Arunoda, Mahābhadrā, Asitodā, and Manasā⁴.....

3. The dried Jambu juice called Jambunada (gold) was lava of Meru. This is a glaring example of mystification.
4. The *Bhagavata* calls the lakes: lakes of milk, honey, treacle, and sweet water. cf. Islamic four rivers of Paradise: (1) of milk, (2) of honey, (3) of wine and (4) of water. The description of 20 filament mountains (5 in each direction) omitted for simplification.

On the summit of Meru is the vast city of Brahma, extending fourteen thousand leagues, and renowned in heaven; and around it, in the cardinal points and the intermediate quarters, are situated the statley cities of Indra and the other regents of the spheres.

The capital of Brahma is enclosed by the river Ganges, which, issuing from the foot of Vishnu, and washing the lunar orb, falls, here, from the skies, and, after encircling the city, divides into four mighty rivers, flowing in opposite directions. These rivers are the Sita, the Alakananda, the Chakshu, and the Bhadra. The first, falling upon the tops of the inferior mountains, on the east side of Meru, flows over their crests, and passes through the country of Bhadraswa, to the ocean. The Alakananda flows south, to (the country of) Bharata, and falls...into the sea. The Chakshu falls into the sea, after traversing all the western mountains, and passing through the country of Ketumala. And the Bhadra washes the country of the Uttarakurus, and empties itself into the northern ocean.⁵

Meru, then, is confined between the mountains Nila and Nishadha (on the north and south), and between Malyavat and Gandhamadana (on the west and east).⁶ It lies between them like the pericarp of a lotus. The countries of Bharata, Ketumala, Bhadraswa, and Uttarakuru lie, like leaves of the lotus of the world, exterior to the boundary mountains. Jathara and Devakuta are two mountain ranges, running north and south, and connecting the two

5. The Northern Ocean is the Arctic Ocean.

6. Not mentioned earlier, which betrays some omission in the Sanskrit text used by the translator. Their position is also wrong. According to *Mahabharata* and other *Puranas*, they are in east and west.

chains of Nila and Nishadha... Nishadha⁷ and Pariyatra are the limitative mountains on the west, stretching, like those on the east, between the Nila and Nishadha ranges...

In (the country of) Bhadrāsua, Vishnu resides as Hayasiras (the horse-headed); in Ketumala, as Varaha (the boar); in Bharata, as the tortoise (Kurma); in Kuru, as the fish (Matsya); in his universal form, every-where : for Hari pervades all places. He, Maitreya, is the supporter of all things : he is all things. In the eight realms, of Kimpurusha and rest, (or all exclusive of Bharata) there is no sorrow, nor weariness, nor anxiety, nor hunger nor apprehension : their inhabitants are exempt from all infirmity and pain, and live (in uninterrupted enjoyment) for ten or twelve thousand years.⁸ Indra never sends rain upon them ; for the earth abounds with water. In those places there is no distinction of Krita, Treta, or any succession of ages...

I have thus briefly described to you, Maitreya, the nine divisions of Jambu-dwipa, which is a hundred thousand yojanas in extent, and which is encircled, as if by a bracelet, by the ocean of salt water of similar dimensions.

7. According to *Bhagavata Purana* 'Pavana', which is preferable. It will eliminate the confusion caused by two adjacent mountains having the same name (Nishadha).

8. From this I infer that Jambu-dwipa is not only the "earth" but also paradise and Jambu-tree is the tree of life.

A Letter of the Younger Pliny to Tacitus

Translated by John B. Firth

My uncle was stationed at Misenum, where he was in active command of the fleet, with full powers. On the 23rd of August about the seventh hour, my mother drew his attention to the fact that a cloud of unusual size and shape had made its appearance. He had taken his sun bath, followed by a cold one, and after a light meal he was lying down and reading. Yet he called for his sandals, and climbed up to a spot from which he could command a good view of the curious phenomenon. Those who were looking at the cloud from some distance could not make out from which mountain it was rising—it was afterwards discovered to have been Mount Vesuvius—but in likeness and form it more closely resembled a pine tree than anything else, for what corresponded to the trunk was of great length and height, and then spread out into a number of branches, the reason being, I imagine, that while the vapour was fresh, the cloud was borne upwards, but when the vapour became wasted, it lost its motion or even became dissipated by its own weight, and spread out laterally. At times it looked white, and at other times dirty and spotted, according to the quantity of earth and cinders that were shot up.

5

THE RIDDLE OF SEVEN CONCENTRIC ISLANDS

The system of seven concentric islands is unique in mythical geography. It was conceived by the Hindus and adapted by Buddhists and Jains. Here I have made an attempt to unravel the mystery of this fanciful geography.

According to *Vishnu Purana*¹ the surface of the flat earth consists of seven zones of land and seven zones of water, encircling one another alternately. They are :

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----|-------------------------|
| 1. Jambu-dwipa | ... | Sea of salt water |
| 2. Plaksha-dwipa | ... | Sea of sugar-cane juice |
| 3. Salmala-dwipa | ... | Sea of wine |
| 4. Kusa-dwipa | ... | Sea of clarified butter |
| 5. Krauncha-dwipa | ... | Sea of curds |
| 6. Saka-dwipa | ... | Sea of milk |
| 7. Pushkara-dwipa | ... | Sea of fresh water |

To be precise Jambu-dwipa is not a *dwipa* which means 'land between two waters' (Persian *do-ābā*) like the plain between Ganga and Yamuna. It is a disc-shaped island in the sea of salt water. The remaining six zones of land are, however, *dwipas*.

1. H. H. Wilson, *Works*, vol. VII, (London : Trubner & Co., 1865), *Vishnu Purana*, Chapter II, p. 109.

WHEEL PATTERN

A glance at the diagrams following p. 72 will show that we are not dealing with real geography, but an ideal one, based on the shape of a wheel. Meru is the axle of the wheel, Jambu-dwipa is the hub and Pushakara-dwipa is the rim. To enclose the sea of fresh water, Land of Gold and Lokaloka Mountain have been added and serve as extra rims to enforce the whole construction. The seven mountains and seven rivers in the five inner *dwipas* are the spokes. The arrangement of mountains and rivers in the first and the last *dwipa* is different. Such a perfect division of land and water is found nowhere in nature. It is simply an Utopia. As Meru was at the North Pole and in the centre of Jambu-dwipa, we have to conclude that Jambu-dwipa was in the Arctic Ocean. The remaining six *dwipas* are figments of imagination and serve as curtains to hide the *sanctum sanctorum* from the profane eyes.

SAPTA SINDHU

Sapta Sindhu (Avestic *Hapta Hindu*) was an ancient name of Punjab, the land of five rivers. This name appears to have been borrowed from the vanished North Polar Island, the original *Sapta Sindhu* (the land of seven rivers). It fits in the scheme of seven concentric islands so well that it could not be placed elsewhere. In each of the five inner *dwipas* there are seven rivers. If we extend them to the central island (Jambu-dwipa) they will meet at Meru. It is quite possible that originally Jambu-dwipa was regarded as a land of seven rivers. Later on it was conceived as a land of four rivers, coinciding with the cardinal points. Perhaps

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 Pushakara-dwipa also had seven rivers. From this I infer that the present system of seven concentric islands is a composite one. The original arrangement of rivers and mountains has been changed in the first and the seventh *dwipa* and retained in the five inner *dwipas*. As Jambu-dwipa was real and the rest imaginary, Jambu-dwipa was the original *Sapta Sindhu*.

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

At the North Pole the sky appears to revolve around the Pole Star. This circumpolar revolution of the stars can be graphically represented by concentric circles. The reason is that if such a drawing is rotated slowly, the circles appear to revolve. (The reader may experiment with the drawings following page 72.) Perhaps the makers of this fanciful geography were aware of this optical illusion and to indicate north-polar origin of their system, they made the earth an image of heaven (revolving circumpolar sky) according to the famous saying, 'as above so below'.

SACRED SEVEN

It is generally not known why the number seven appears again and again in the Pauranic geography e.g., seven *dwipas*, seven seas, seven mountains, seven rivers, etc.²

The sanctity of number seven owes its origin to the circumpolar constellations of Great Bear (*Ursa Major*) and Little Bear (*Ursa Minor*), each consisting of seven stars. Mount Meru was regarded as the seat of Seven Adityas (Great Bear).³ As the background of the Pauranic geography

2. For a detailed description, see the excerpt on pp. 75-80.

3. For the reference, see p. 50.

was the North Pole and the above two constellations are there directly overhead, it was but natural to lay stress on number seven.

PROPORTIONATE DIMENSIONS

The seven *dwipas* are encircled by seven seas or oceans of equal extent. Each island and each ocean is, respectively, of twice the extent of that which precedes it, as shown below :

	J	P	S	K	K	S	P
Islands	1	2	4	8	16	32	64
Oceans	1	2	4	8	16	32	64

The letters at the top are abbreviations of the names of various *dwipas*. The numbers given opposite the words 'Islands' and 'Oceans' indicate their extent in lacs of yojanas (see p. 58).

This geometrical progression shows that we are dealing with a system of geography, which is artificial. a deliberate attempt to devise a system perfect in every respect.⁴ At the North Pole the stars appear to revolve around the Pole Star in perfect circular orbits, and so do the sun and moon. The primitive man was impressed by this law and order in nature and regarded the North Polar Island as a perfect land. This perfection is reflected in the geographical system devised by the Hindus.

4 I feel that originally the seven zones of land and seven zones of water were of equal extent as shown in my drawings between pp. 72-73. The idea of geometrical progression is an afterthought and reveals advanced knowledge of geometry.

OCEAN OF MILK

Of all the seven seas (or oceans), mentioned in the *Vishnu Purana*, the sea of salt water and sea of fresh water are real and refer to the Arctic Ocean. When the accumulated snow melts in summer, it adds a top layer of fresh water to the salt water beneath. The sea of sugar-cane juice and the sea of wine are figments of imagination. The sea of milk, the sea of curds and the sea of clarified butter are the frozen Arctic Ocean in disguise.

LAND OF GOLD

The Land of Gold beyond the Pushakara-dwipa has been transferred from Jambu-dwipa to the end of the earth. Meru was the mountain of gold in the centre of Jambu-dwipa. On its summit grew the Jambu-tree. The juice of its fallen fruits, when exposed to air, was converted into gold, called *Jambunad*. Thus the island where the Jambu tree grew must have been an island of gold, the real El Dorado. The Land of Gold (*Suvarnabhumi*) and the Island of Gold (*Suvarna-dwipa*) are one and the same, *i. e.* the North Polar Island. From this we may infer that the Golden Age was the period when man was living there.

I have already explained (pp. 50, 60) that the Jambu tree growing on Mount Meru (an active volcano) was the smoke rising from its crater and *Jambunad* (the juice of Jambu fruits) was the lava. One can infer from it that the fruits of Jambu tree were the volcanic bombs.⁵

5. Volcanic Bomb—A lump of lava, usually rounded in shape, which has been thrown out of a volcano in the liquid state, solidifying as it fell. It varies in diameter from a few inches to several feet.

—W. G. Moore, *A Dictionary of Geography*.
(Penguin Books, 1954), p. 181.

LOKALOKA MOUNTAIN

Lokaloka, the ring of mountain around the world⁶ was the mountainous horizon seen by the inhabitants of the North Polar Island (the earth of the ancients) and belongs to a period when the level of the Arctic Ocean was considerably low. It may be compared to the Chakravala Parvata of the Buddhists, Alburz of the Iranians and Koh-e-Qaf of the Muslims.

PATALA

According to *Vishnu Purana* there are seven regions below the earth, each extending downwards ten thousand yojanas. (Thus the depth of the earth below the surface is seventy thousand yojanas). These seven regions "are called Atala, Vitala, Nitala, Gabhastimat, Mahatala, Sutala, and Patala. Their soil is, severally, white, black, purple, yellow, sandy, stony, and of gold. They are embellished with magnificent palaces in which dwell numerous *danavas*, *daityas*, *yakshas*, and great snake-gods."⁷

In the *Bhagavata* and *Padma Puranas*, the above seven regions are named Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Talatala, Mahatala, Rasatala, and Patala.

For the sake of argument let us suppose that the earth under which the seven Patalas are located is the North Polar Island. The word *Rasa*⁸ means water and here it

6. For details regarding Lokaloka Mountain, see p. 79.

7. Wilson, *Works*, vol. VII, p. 209. If the above regions are solid strata of various colours, how can they be inhabited?

8. The word occurs in the Rig Veda (X. 75.6) as the name of a river along with others. However, Tilak explains the Vedic *Rasa* as "a mythical river that divides the gods from the fiends."

—*The Arctic Home in the Vedas* (Poona, 1956) p. 336.

would signify the Arctic Ocean. *Rasatala*, appears to be the oldest and the only name for the land beyond the Arctic Ocean. If we ignore the number seven, the Patalas are reduced to one great region, called *Mahatala*, i.e. the vast land beyond the Arctic Ocean.

From the point of view of the inhabitants of the North Polar Island, the underworld was the region beyond the Arctic Ocean, inhabited by savage tribes (*daityas*, *danavas*, *nagas*, etc.), who used to attack the North Polar Island, the abode of the gods. This may account for the wars between the gods (*sura*) and demons (*asura*) of the Hindus and the wars between the gods and titans of the Greeks.

As the North Polar Island was at the top of the world, the underworld was below and beyond the Arctic Ocean in the South. (At North Pole the horizon coincides with the celestial equator.)

HELLS

According to *Vishnu Purana* the hells "are situated beneath the earth and beneath the waters."⁹ Supposing that the Jambu-dwipa (North Polar Island) was the earth, the waters should be the sea of salt water (Arctic Ocean). As the said island was volcanic in nature and its centre was occupied by an active volcano (Mount Meru), we have to presume that the hell was the inside of the said mountain (beneath the Jambu tree, i.e. smoke rising from the crater). Its fire accounts for the fire in the hell.

9. Wilson, *Works*, vol. VII, p. 214.

HEAVENLY REGIONS

According to *Vishnu Purana*¹⁰ the universe consists of seven spheres, counting from below upwards. They are :

- | | | |
|----------------|-----|------------------------------|
| 1. Bhur-loka | ... | Sphere of the Earth |
| 2. Bhuvar-loka | ... | Sphere of the Sky |
| 3. Swar-loka | ... | Sphere of the Planets |
| 4. Mahar-loka | ... | Sphere of the Saints |
| 5. Jano-loka | ... | Sphere of the Sons of Brahma |
| 6. Tapo-loka | ... | Sphere of Penance |
| 7. Satya-loka | | Sphere of Truth |

In Swar-loka the following planets revolve in ascending order :

- (1) Sun (2) Moon (3) Mercury (4) Venus (5) Mars (6) Jupiter (7) Saturn.

Beyond Saturn are the Sapta-Rishis (*Ursa major*) and above them Dhruva (the Pole Star), the pivot or axis of the whole planetary sphere and limit of the Swar-loka.

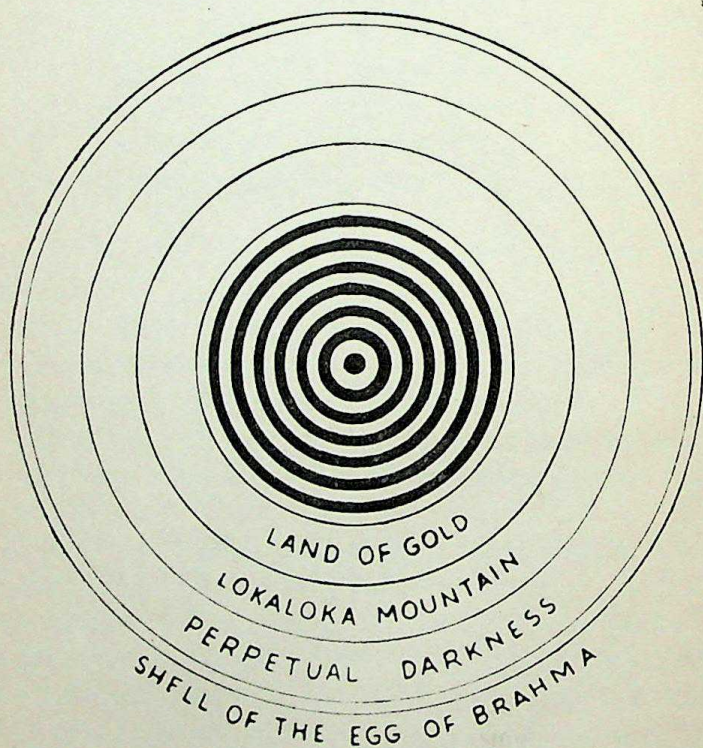
Bhur-loka (the earth) is the lowest and Satya-loka is the highest. The axis of the earth passes through them at the centre.

Here I would like to point out that Truth (*Satyam*), Order (*Ritam*) and immortality (*Amritam*) are the attributes of the Pole Star, personified as God. The Pole Star was regarded as the gate of heaven, (*Swarga-dwara*). The heavenly regions (4-7) are regarded as the spiritual spheres where the noble souls are rewarded after death. It is significant that the *Sphere of the Sons of Brahma* and the *Sphere of Truth* coincide with the axis of the earth and are thus linked with the Pole Star.

10. Wilson, *Works*, vol. VII, pp 225-227.

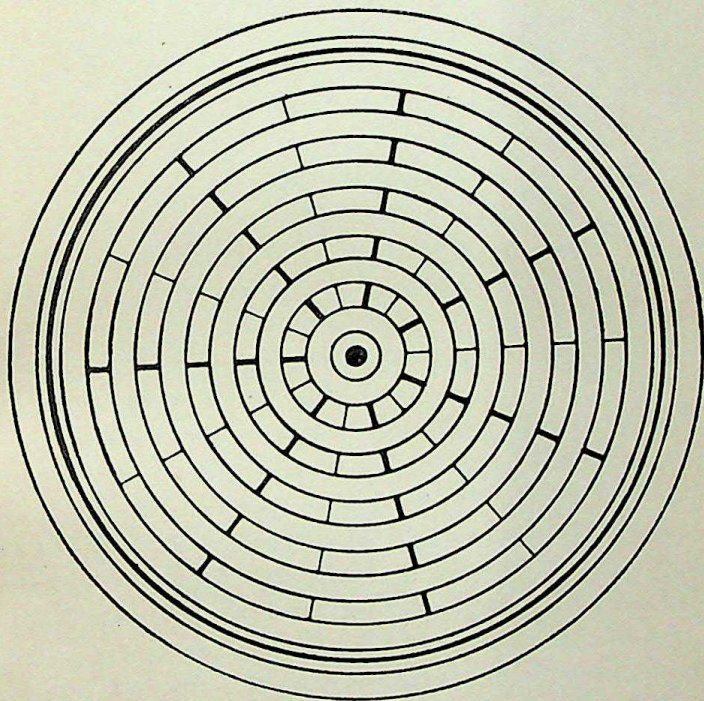


HINDU COSMOS

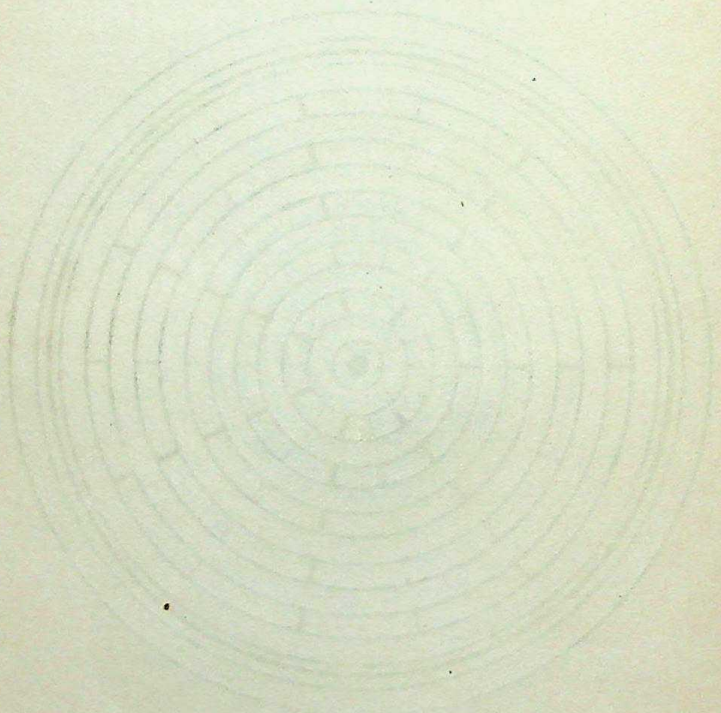


Disc of the Earth which divides the Cosmic Egg into two halves. Seven Concentric Islands are in the centre.

SEVEN CONCENTRIC ISLANDS



Thick Spokes : 7 Mountains Thin Spokes : 7 Rivers
Centre : Mt. Meru, Thick Circle : Manasottara Mountain



THE REVOLVING CIRCUMPOLAR SKY

In *Vishnu Purana*¹¹ there is a picturesque description of the revolving circumpolar sky :

"I have thus described to you, Maitreya, the chariots of the nine planets, all of which are fastened to Dhruva by aerial cords. The orbs of all the planets, asterisms, and stars are attached to Dhruva, and travel, accordingly, in their proper orbits, being kept in their places by their respective bands of air. As many are the stars, so many are the chains of air that secure them to Dhruva; and, as they turn round, they cause the pole-star also to revolve. In the same manner as the oil-man himself, going round, causes the spindle to revolve, so the planets travel round, suspended by cords of air, which are circling round a (whirling) centre. The air which is called *Pravaha* is so termed because it bears along the planets, which turn round, like a disc of fire, driven by the aerial wheel."

This clearly shows that Dhruva (Pole Star) is the centre of revolution of all the stars and planets. The conception of aerial cords is unique and most probably derived from the observation of "circumpolar vortex—the great icy winds that whip around the top and bottom of the world. These winds move generally from west to east, but the outer edge of the vortex twists and bends like the bottom of a large swirling skirt."¹² This proves that the author of these lines was aware of astronomical as well as meteorological phenomena of the North Pole. This knowledge requires close observation, not just mathematical calculation. How did

11. *Ibid*, pp. 305-6.

12. *Time*, Magazine dt. Nov. 11, 1974, Article "Weather change : Poorer Harvests."

the Hindus come to know about it ? I have no doubt, this is the first hand knowledge derived from personal observation. For a proper understanding of the above passage, we must visualize that the observer is stationed at the North Pole and the Pole Star is at the zenith.

Lucknow : March 1982

ISHAQ SIDDIQI

THE GEOGRAPHY OF VISHNU PURANA*

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PLAKSHA-DWIPA

PARASARA.—In the same manner as Jambu-dwipa is girt round about by the ocean of salt water, so that ocean is surrounded by the insular continent of Plaksha; the extent of which is twice that of Jambu-dwipa.

Medhatithi, who was made sovereign of Plaksha, had seven sons : Santabhaya, Sisira, Sukhodaya, Ananda, Siva, Kshemaka, and Dhruva. And the dwipa was divided amongst them; and each division was named after the prince to whom it was subject. The several kingdoms were bounded by as many ranges of mountains, named, severally, Gomeda, Chandra, Narada, Dundubhi, Somaka, Sumanas, and Vaibhrajā. ... There are, also, in the seven divisions of Plaksha, seven rivers, flowing to the sea, whose names alone are sufficient to take away sin. They are the Anutapta, Sikhi, Vipasa, Tridiva, Kramu, Amrita, and Sukrita. ...

In this dwipa is a large fig-tree (*Ficus religiosa*), of similar size as the Jambu-tree of Jambu-dwipa; and this dwipa is called Plaksha, after the name of the tree. ...

Plaksha-dwipa is surrounded, as by a disc, by the sea of molasses, of the same extent as the land. Such, Maitreya, is a brief description of Plaksha-dwipa.

SALMALA-DWIPA

The hero Vapushmat was king of the next, Salmala-dwipa, whose seven sons also gave designations to seven varshas or divisions. Their names were Sweta, Harita,

* Continued from p. 62. Excerpted from *Vishnu Purana*, Translated by H.H. Wilson, *Works*, (London : Trubner & Co., 1865), Vol. VII pp. 191-204, 261-62, Sub-headings mine.

Jimuta, Rohita, Vaidyuta, Manasa, and Suprabha. The Ikshu sea is encompassed by the continent of Salmala, which is twice its extent. There are seven (principal) mountain-ranges, abounding in precious gems, and dividing the varshas from each other ; and there are, also, seven chief rivers. The mountains are called Kumuda, Unnata, Balahaka, Drona, fertile in medicinal herbs, Kanka, Mahisha, and Kakudmat. The rivers are Yoni, Toya, Vitrishna, Chandra, Sukla, Vimochani, and Nivritti ; all whose waters cleanse away sins. ...

A large Salmali (silk-cotton) tree grows in this dwipa, and gives it its name. The dwipa is surrounded by the Sura sea (sea of wine), of the same extent as itself.

KUSA-DWIPA

The Sura sea is entirely encircled by Kusa-dwipa, which is every way twice the size of the preceding continent. The king, Jyotishmat, had seven sons, Udbhida, Venumat, Swairatha, Lambana, Dhriti, Prabhakara, and Kapila, after whom the seven portions or varshas of the island were called Udbhida, etc.

The seven principal mountains in this dwipa are named Vidruma, Hemasaila, Dyutimat, Pushpavat, Kusesaya, Hari, and Mandara. And the seven rivers are Dhutapapa, Siva, Pavitra, Sammati, Vidyudambhas, Mahavanya, Sarvapahara. Besides these, there are numerous rivers and mountains of less importance. Kusa-dwipa is so named from a clump of Kusa grass (*Poa*) growing there. It is surrounded by the Ghritha sea (the sea of butter), of the same size as the continent.

KRAUNCHA-DWIPA

The sea of Ghrita is encompassed by Krauncha-dwipa, which is twice as large as Kusa-dwipa. The king of this dwipa was Dyutimat, whose sons, and the seven varshas named after them, were Kusala, Mallaga, Ushna, Pivara, Andhakaraka, Muni, and Dundubhi. The seven boundary mountains, pleasing to gods and celestial spirits, are Krauncha, Vamana, Andhakaraka, Devavrit, Pundarikavat, Dundubhi, and Mahasaila; each of which is, in succession, twice as lofty as the series that precedes it, in the same manner as each dwipa is twice as extensive as the one before it.

They drink of countless streams, of which the principal are denominated Gauri, Kumudwati, Sandhya, Ratri, Manojava, Kshanti, and Pundarika. ...Krauncha is surrounded by the sea of curds, of a similar extent; and that, again, is encompassed by Saka-dwipa.

SAKA-DWIPA

The sons of Bhavya, the king of Saka-dwipa, after whom its varshas were denominated, were Jalada, Kumara, Sukumara, Manivaka, Kusumoda, Maudaki, and Mahadruma. The seven mountains separating the countries were Udayagiri, Jaladhara, Raivataka, Syama, Ambikeya, Ramya, and Kesarin. There grows a large Saka (Teak) tree, frequented by the Siddhas and Gandharvas, the wind from which, as produced by its fluttering leaves, diffuses delight. The sacred lands of this continent are peopled by the four castes. Its seven holy rivers, that wash away all sin, are the Sukumari, Kumari, Nalini, Dhenuka, Ikshu, Venuka, and

Gabhasti. ...

Saka-dwipa is encircled by the sea of milk, as by an armlet; and the sea is of the same breadth as the continent which it embraces.

PUSHKARA-DWIPA

The Kshira ocean (or sea of milk) is encompassed by (the seventh dwipa, or) Pushkara, which is twice the size of Saka-dwipa. Savana, who was made its sovereign, had but two sons, Mahavira and Dhataki, after whom the two varshas of Pushkara were so named. These are divided by one mighty range of mountains, called Manasottara, which runs in a circular direction (forming an outer and an inner circle). This mountain is fifty thousand yojanas in height, and as many in its breadth; dividing the dwipa in the middle, as if with a bracelet, into two divisions, which are also of a circular form, like the mountain that separates them. Of these two, the Mahavira-varsha is exterior to the circumference of Manasottara, and Dhataki lies within the circle; and both are frequented by heavenly spirits and gods. There are no other mountains in Pushkara, neither are there any rivers. ...

A Nyagrodha-tree (*Ficus Indica*) grows on this dwipa, which is the especial abode of Brahma; and he resides in it, adored by the gods and demons. Pushkara is surrounded by the sea of fresh water, which is of equal extent with the continent it invests.

In this manner the seven island-continent are encompassed, successively, by the seven oceans; and each ocean and continent is, respectively, of twice the extent of that which precedes it. ...

LOKALOKA MOUNTAIN

Beyond the sea of fresh water is a region of twice its extent, where the land is of gold, and where no living beings reside. Thence extends the Lokaloka mountain, which is ten thousand yojanas in breadth, and as many in height; and beyond it perpetual darkness invests the mountain all around; which darkness is, again, encompassed by the shell of the egg. ..

On the Lokaloka mountain, which I have described to you reside the four holy protectors of the world,¹³ or Sudhaman and Sankhapad, (the two sons of Kardama), and Hiranyaroman, and Ketumat. Unaffected by the contrasts of existence, void of selfishness, active, and unencumbered by dependants, they take charge of the spheres, themselves abiding on the four cardinal points of the Lokaloka mountain.

TRANSLATOR'S OBSERVATIONS

The description of the dwipas in the Agni, Brahma, Kurma, and Vayu Puranas agrees with that of our text. The Markandeya, Linga, and Matsya contain no details. The Bhagavata and Padma follow the same order as the Vishnu, etc., but alter all the names and many of the measurements. The account of the Mahabharata* is very irregular and confused. The variations throw no additional light upon the geographical system of the Puranas. Some traces of

13. These "four holy protectors of the world" may be compared to the four sons of Brahma and to the four sons of Horus (Egyptian). They also remind us of the four Bacabs of the Mayas. The four mountains at the cardinal points have been replaced by a circular mountain.

* *Bhishma-parvan*, 401-494.

this appear discoverable in the west; and the seven dwipas, with their surrounding seas, may have some connexion with the notion of the seven climates, as Colonel Wilford has supposed. That learned but fanciful writer bestowed great pains upon the verification of these fictions, and imagined the different dwipas to represent actual divisions of the globe : Jambu being India; Kusa, the Kush of Scripture, or the countries between Mesopotamia and India; Plaksha being Asia Minor; Salmala, Eastern Europe; Karauncha, Germany; Saka, the British Isles; and Pushkara, Iceland. The white or silver island, or island of the moon,¹⁴ was, also, according to him, the island of Great Britain. Whatever may be thought of his conclusions, his essays on these subjects, particularly in the eighth, tenth, and eleventh volumes of the Asiatic Researches, contain much curious and interesting matter.

14. I identify it with the North Polar Island after glaciation

THE EARTH ACCORDING TO HINDU ASTRONOMY

North Pole is the most suitable place on earth to study the star-studded sky. During a half-year long night the stars appear to revolve around the Pole Star, completing each round in 24 hours due to axial rotation of the earth. When the queen of night appears, she does the same, passing through all the phases, from the crescent to the full moon, every fort-night. When the day dawns, this celestial panorama is replaced by the splendour of the sun, circling the invisible centre of the circumpolar sky for six months. It was but natural that the primitive inhabitants of the North Polar Island, observing this celestial drama with awe, acquired the rudimentary knowledge of heavenly bodies and laid the foundation of astronomy.

Traces of North Polar origin of astronomy are discernible in *Surya Siddhanta* and *Siddhanta Siromani*, the well-known Hindu astronomical works. Unfortunately, we do not know when and by whom the original *Surya Siddhanta* was composed. In its present form, it dates back to about 1000 A.D. Its popularity can be judged from the fact that there are about 28 commentaries on its Sanskrit text by various Hindu astronomers. *Siddhanta Siromani* is the famous astronomical treatise of Bhaskaracharya, written about 1150 A.D.¹

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1. *The Surya Siddhanta*, Edited by K. S. Shukla, Deptt. of Mathematics and Astronomy, Lucknow University, Lucknow, 1957, pp. 29-30. *Brahma-Sphuta Siddhanta*, Chief Editor, Ram Swaroop Sharma, Indian Institute of Astronomical and Sanskrit Research, New Delhi, 1966, p. 70.

A critical analysis of chapter 12 of *Surya Siddhanta*, captioned "On Cosmographical Matters" reveals North Polar origin of the Hindu concept of cosmos. Here I quote the relevant verses from the English translation of the book by Pundit Bapu Deva Sastri,² to be followed by my comments. *Siddhanta Siromani* will be treated in the same way. The numbers before the quotations are the numbers of the verses cited.

SURYA SIDDHANTA

29. This *Brahmanda* (the golden egg sacred to Brahma) is hollow : in this (the worlds) *Bhur*, *Bhuvar* etc. are situated. It is like a *samputa* (a casket) formed by two *katahas* (frying vessels joined mouth to mouth) and of a spherical shape.
- 30- The circumference of the middle of the *Brahmanda*
31. is called *Vyomakaksha* (the orbit of heaven). In it (*i. e. Brahmanda*) all the stars revolve. Beneath them Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury and the Moon revolve one below the other.....
32. The terrestrial globe, possessing Brahma's most excellent power of steadiness, remains in space at the centre of *Brahmanda* (which is) all around.
33. The seven *Patala Bhumis* or infernal regions formed by the concave strata of the earth are very beautiful, being inhabited by *nagas* (serpents) and *asuras* (demons) and having the

2. Translation of the *Surya Siddhanta* by Pundit Bapu Deva Sastri, and of the *Siddhanta Siromani* by the late Lancelot Wilkinson, Revised by Pundit Bapu Deva Sastri, Calcutta, Baptist Mission Press, 1861.

liquors of the divine plants (which shine by their own light).

34. The golden mountain Meru, containing heaps of various precious stones, passes through the middle of the terrestrial globe (as an axis projecting on both sides at the poles).
35. The gods with Indra and the great holy sages inhabit the top of the Meru (*i. e.* the North Pole) while the *asuras* are at the bottom (*i. e.* the South Pole). They (*i. e.* the gods and *asuras*) hate each other.
36. The Great Ocean (the Ocean of Salt Water) encircles the Meru; it is like a girdle (or zone) to the earth and separates the regions of the gods and the *asuras* (*i. e.* it is at the equator and divides the terrestrial globe into two hemispheres: the North is sacred to the gods and the South to the *asuras*).
37. Around the middle of the Meru in the directions of the east etc. and at equal distances in the ocean are the four cities made by the gods in the different dwipas.
38. To the east of the Meru (*i. e.* North Pole) at a fourth part of the earth's circumference in the Bhadrasha-varsha (a division of a continent) is the city called Yama-Koti having golden ramparts and arched gateways.
39. So to the south in the Bharat-varsha there is the great city called Lanka: to the west in the Ketumala-varsha there is the city called Romaka.
40. To the north in the Kuru-varsha there is the city

called Siddha-Puri (or Siddha-Pura). Liberal and devout men being free from pain inhabit that (city).

41. These (four cities) are situated at a distance equal to the fourth part of the earth's circumference from each other : (and) the Meru sacred to the gods is north of them at the same distance.
42. When the sun is at the equinoctial, he passes through the zenith of these (cities) and, therefore, there is neither equinoctial shadow nor elevation of the terrestrial axis at these cities.
43. On both sides of the Meru, (*i. e.* the North and South Poles of the earth) the two polar stars are situated in the heaven at their zenith. These two stars are in the horizon of the cities situated on the equinoctial regions.
73. The starry sphere, bound at its two Poles (North and South), being struck with the *Pravaha* winds revolves constantly : (so) do the orbits of the planets confined within it in regular order.

COMMENTS

29-30. Here *Brahmanda* stands for the celestial sphere. The idea of two vessels joined mouth to mouth to form a sphere is borrowed from the Vedas.³

31-32. The terrestrial sphere (earth) occupies the centre of the celestial sphere. Planets and stars revolving around it show that the conception of universe is geo-centric.

3. Rig-Veda, I, 164, 12; I, 164, 17; II, 27, 15. Atharva-Veda, X, 8, 9.

33. The seven *Patalas* are imaginary. To accommodate them within the earth, the seven stratas have been conceived as concave. This is an improvement upon the Pauranic conception, already explained on pp. 70-71.

34-35. Translation of verse 34 is not clear. Whitney's translation is better: "A collection of manifold jewels, a mountain of gold, is Meru, passing through the middle of the earth-globe (*bhu-gola*), and protruding on either side."⁴ Conceiving Meru in this way reminds one of a ball of thread wound round a shuttle. According to this view both the mountains are just the pointed ends of a single formation. But this is sheer fantasy.

The idea of two mountains, one at the North Pole (*Sumeru*)⁵ and the other at the South Pole (*Kumeru*),⁶ was inspired by the reflection of the North Polar Mountain in the Arctic Ocean. Their location, an Arctic and an Antarctic,—one celestial and the other infernal—does not imply that the Hindus were aware of the earth from Pole to Pole. They, of course, had intimate knowledge of the Arctic regions, but they were unaware of Antarctica. So we must regard *Kumeru* as an imaginary mountain, opposite of *Sumeru* and complementary to it.

4. H.H. Wilson, *Works* (London : 1865), Vol. VII, p. 207.

5. *Sumeru* (सुमेरु) - 'Meru in Sanskrit signifies an axis or pivot.' - Wilford in *Asiatick Researches*. (Calcutta, 1805), Vol. VIII, p. 284.
The prefix *su* (सु) means 'good, excellent, right, virtuous, beautiful' etc. - Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1951) p. 1219.

6. *Kumeru* (कुमेरु) - The prefix *Ku* (कु) means 'bad'. —Ibid, p. 286.

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36. The Great Ocean (the Ocean of Salt Water), at the equator and girdling the Jambu-dwipa (northern hemisphere) is in fact the Arctic Ocean, transferred to the equator, because Jambu-dwipa was originally an island in the Arctic Ocean. To identify Jambu-dwipa with Asia or northern hemisphere is, therefore, wrong.

37-42. The four cities at the equator are a variant of four mountains at the cardinal points on the border of the earth and both are imaginary. These cities were originally placed in the four *varshas* of Jambu-dwipa :

Yamakoti in Bhadraswa	...	East
Lanka in Bharat-varsha	...	South
Romaka in Ketumala	...	West
Siddhapuri in Uttarakuru	...	North

According to *Surya-Siddhanta* Jambu-dwipa is the northern hemisphere of the earth. As I have already explained on pp. 49-62 that Jambu-dwipa was originally an island at the North Pole, we may infer from it that here the flat earth geography of the Puranas has been superimposed on the round earth.

The four cities are generally supposed to be Java (Yamakoti), Ceylon (Lanka), Rome (Romaka), and America (Siddhapuri). Only two of these four cities can be safely identified *viz.* Lanka and Romaka.

Lanka and Rome are not situated at the equator. The former lies between 6 and 10 degrees north of equator and the latitude of the latter is 41° 54' N. This shows that the location of these two cities at equator is not real but ideal.

Yamakoti or Yamapuri should have been in the south as south is the direction of Yama, the god of death.

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It is significant that Siddhapuri is placed in Uttarakuru (Arctic region), which was supposed to be the land of the Siddhas (shamans), but wrongly transferred to the equator.

43. The conception of two pole stars is incorrect. There is no corresponding pole star to mark the south celestial pole, as claimed by the author of *Surya Siddhanta*. It is just an attempt to make the south a mirror image of the north.

To an observer stationed at the equator, the Pole Star would appear on the horizon towards the north. Whether the Hindus acquired this knowledge by personal observation or through some other source, we do not know.

73. The idea of *Pravaha* winds moving the starry sphere is borrowed from the Puranas and I have already explained their nature on page 73.

SIDDHANTA SIROMANI

The *Siddhanta Siromani* of Bhaskar is comprised of thirteen chapters. Chapter 3 is called '*Bhuvana-kos* or Cosmography.' The relevant verses (Wilkinson's translation, revised by Pundit Bapu Deva Sastri) are quoted below :

2. This globe of the earth formed of (the five elementary principles) earth, air, water, the ether, and fire, is perfectly round, and encompassed by the orbits of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, and by the constella-

7. It is significant that *Surya Siddhanta* is comprised of 14 chapters and *Siddhanta Siromani* of 13 chapters. Their total comes to 27, which is the number of the *Nakshatras*.

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 tions. It has no (material) supporter, but stands firmly in the expanse of heaven by its own inherent force...

11. If this blessed earth were level, like a plane mirror, then why is not the sun, revolving above at a distance from the earth, visible to men as well as to the gods? (on the Pauranika hypothesis, that it is always revolving about Meru, above and horizontally to the earth).
17. Lanka is situated in the middle of the earth: Yamakoti is situated to the east of Lanka, and Romakapattana to the west. The city of Siddhapura lies underneath Lanka. Sumeru is situated to the north (under the North Pole), and Vadavanala to the south of Lanka (under the South Pole):
18. These six places are situated at a distance of one-fourth part of the earth's circumference each from its adjoining one. So those who have a knowledge of geography maintain. At Meru reside the gods and the *siddhas*, whilst at Vadavanala are situated all the hells and the *daityas*.
21. Most learned astronomers have stated that Jambu-dwipa embraces the whole northern hemisphere lying to the north of the salt sea: and that the other six dwipas and the (seven) seas viz. those of salt, milk, etc. are all situated in the southern hemisphere.
22. To the south of the equator lies the salt sea, and to the south of it the sea of milk ..

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23. Beyond the sea of milk lie in succession the seas of curds, clarified butter, sugar-cane juice, and wine: and, last of all, that of sweet water, which surrounds Vadavanala. The Patala Lokas or infernal regions, form the concave strata of the earth.
25. The Saka, Salmala, Kausa,* Krauncha, Gomed-aka,** and Pushkara Dwipas are situated (in the intervals of the above mentioned seas) in regular alternation: each dwipa lying, it is said, between two of these seas."

COMMENTS

2. It reveals that up to the age of *Siddhanta Siromani* (1150 A.D.), Hindus believed in geo-centric system, i. e. the earth was regarded as the centre of the universe. (of. verse 1, "*Brahmanda*, in the centre of which is the earth.")

11. Here the learned author refutes the flat earth theory of the Puranas. However, the claim of Pauraniks that the Sun revolves 'about Meru, above and horizontally to the earth' was correct from the point of view of the observer stationed at the North Pole. As a matter of fact it was there that the idea of geo-centric system occurred to the primitive man.

17-18. As the geography of *Siddhanta Siromani* is a crude attempt to superimpose the geography of the flat earth on the round earth, we may infer that originally *Vadavanala*⁸

8. *Vadavanala*. It is also called *Vadavagni* meaning 'mare's fire', submarine fire or the fire of the lower regions, fabled to emerge from a cavity called the mare's mouth (*Vadava-mukh*) under the sea at the South Pole.

—Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit English Dictionary*. (Oxford, 1951), p. 915, under *Vadaba*.

*Kusa-dwipa of *Vishnu Purana*.

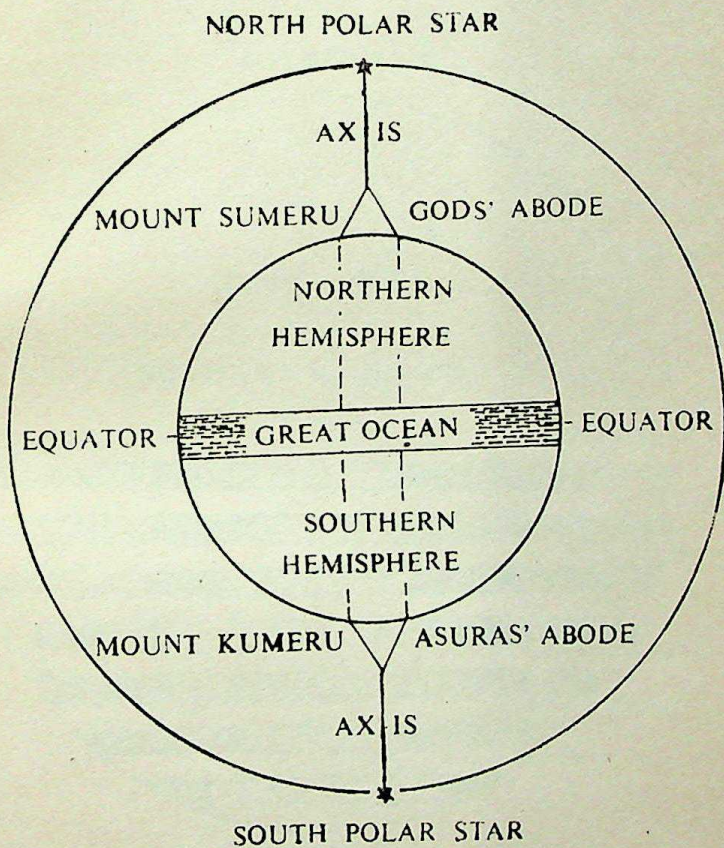
**Plaksha-dwipa of *Vishnu Purana*.

(submarine fire) was the bottom of Meru. Whilst the Meru was retained at the North Pole, the *Vadavanala* was transferred to the South Pole. This shows that Meru was a volcano and its fire inspired the idea of hell.

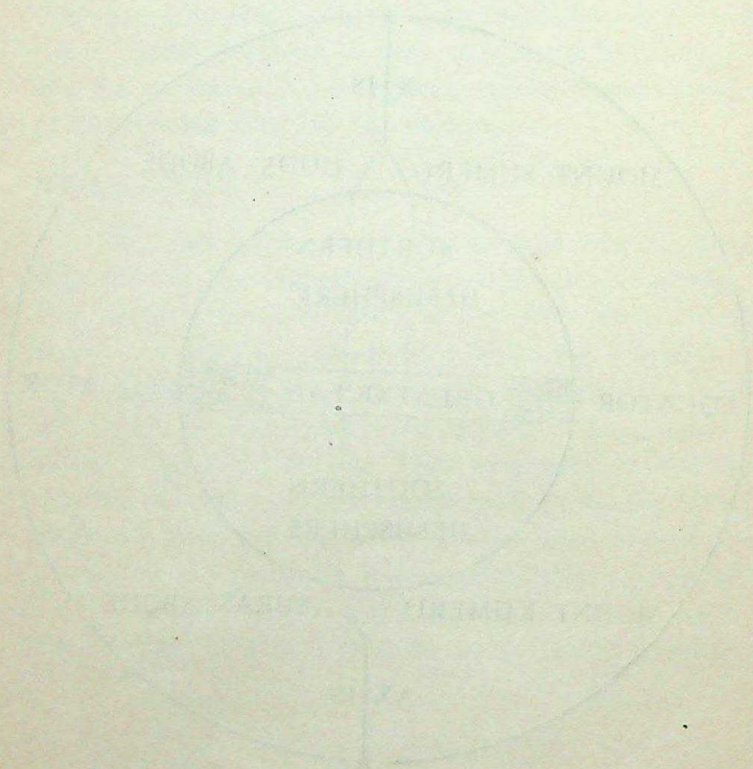
21-25. The geography of Jambu-dwipa (an island in the Arctic Ocean) has been superimposed on the whole of northern hemisphere of the earth. Consequently, the sea of salt water (Arctic Ocean) has been transferred to the equator, and the remaining six dwipas along with their oceans, are confined to the southern hemisphere.

CONCLUSION

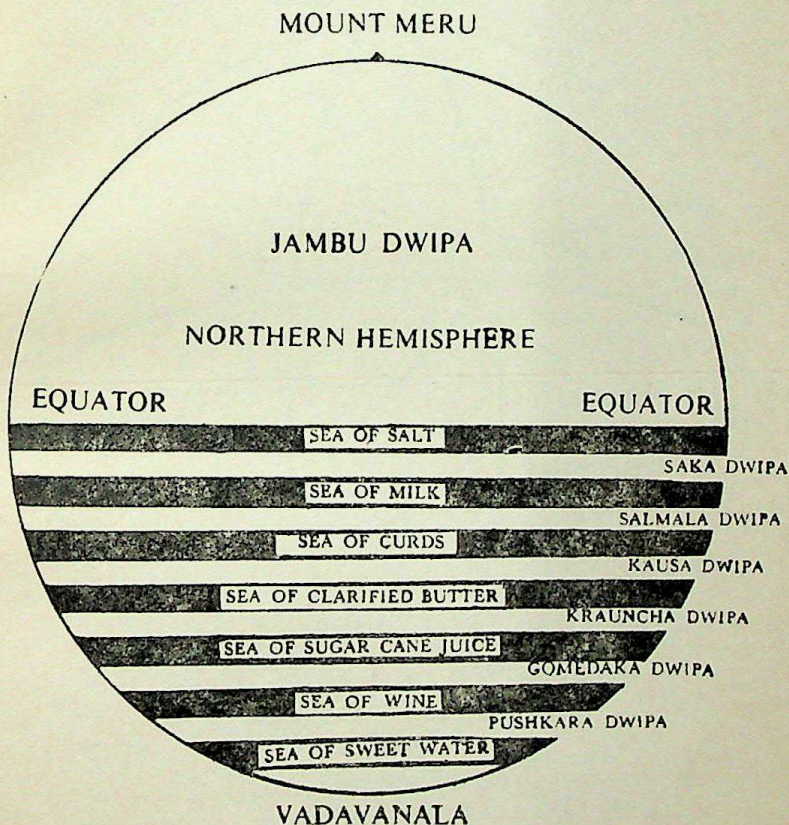
The importance of *Surya Siddhanta* and *Siddhanta Siromani* for the present study lies in two facts, viz. (1) they confirm Meru's situation at the North Pole, (2) they show how the flat earth geography of the Puranas was superimposed on the round earth. It is just a desperate attempt to reconcile science and religion. The Puranas are sacred books of the Hindus. The geographical knowledge revealed therein was too sacred to be ignored. When it became known that the earth is round like a ball, the map of the Pauranic flat earth was superimposed on the round earth, resulting in the queer conception of the earth of *Surya Siddhanta* and more-so of the *Siddhanta Siromani*.



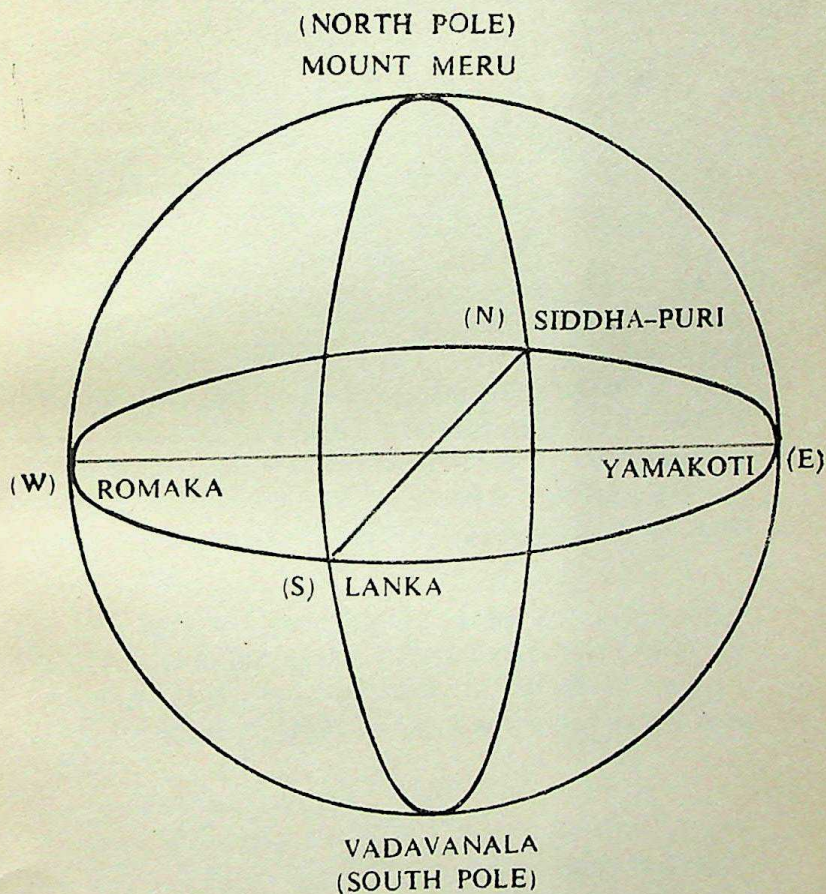
The Cosmic Egg (*Brahmanda*)
According to *Surya-Siddhanta*



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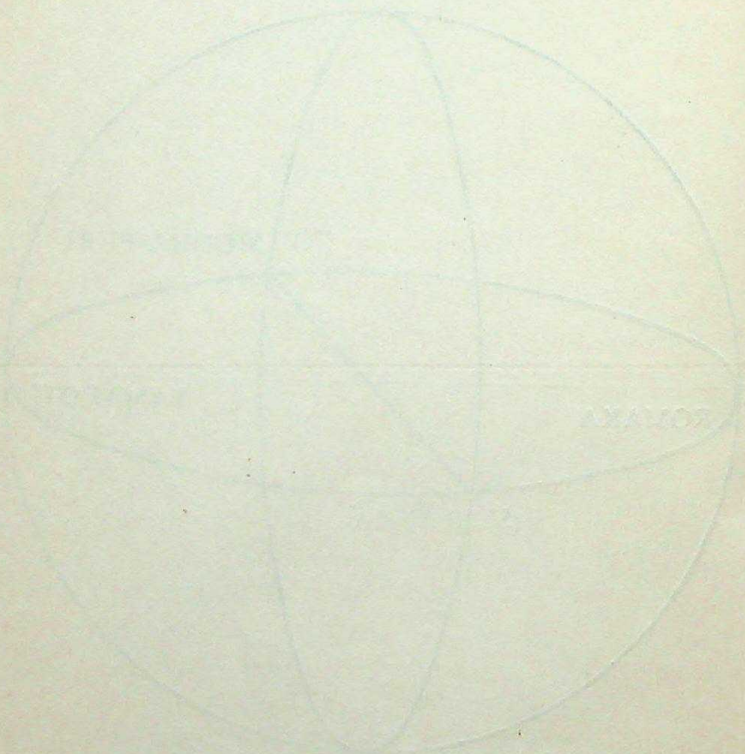
Seven Dwipas & Seven Oceans
According to *Siddhanta-Siromani*



Landmarks in Six Directions
According to *Surya-Siddhanta & Siddhanta-Siromani*

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7

LOTUS AND TORTOISE AS SYMBOLS OF THE EARTH

A full-blown pink lotus rising out of blue waters reminds one of an island. The same effect is created by a tortoise showing its convex back above the surface of waters. Since the primitive man conceived the earth as an island, it was but natural that lotus and tortoise were adopted as symbols of the earth. As I have already shown in previous pages the earth of the ancients was an island at the North Pole, we may infer that lotus and tortoise were symbols of the North Polar Island.

We have also seen that the number seven plays a vital role in Pauranic geography. The reason is that circumpolar constellations of the Great Bear and Little Bear consist of seven stars each. (Their shape was inspired by the polar bear.)

THE EARTH AS LOTUS

The cardinal points inspired another system of geography, wherein the number four appears again and again, e. g., four mountains, four rivers, four lakes, four countries, four cities, etc. This system was incorporated in Pauranic geography as will be evident from the following extract :

Meru is confined between the mountains Nila and Nishadha (on the north and south), and between Malayavat and Gandhamadana (on the west & east). It lies between them like the pericarp of a lotus.¹ The countries of Bharat, Ketumala, Bhadraswa and Uttarakuru lie, like leaves of the world, exterior to the boundary mountains.

—*Vishnu Purana*, Translated by H. H. Wilson,
Works (London, 1865), Vol. VII, pp. 121-23

Here earth (Jambu-dwipa) has been conceived as a lotus of four petals.² This shows that the earth of the Hindus was an island. As Meru was at the North Pole, this island must also have been at the North Pole.

Meru is compared to the pericarp (seed-cup) of a lotus. This accounts for its peculiar shape, viz., like an inverted cone or inverted pyramid, having its top twice as broad as the base (cutting off its pointed end).

The four petals, pointing to four directions, represent the earth divided into four parts according to the cardinal points :

Uttara Kuru	...	North
Bharat-varsha	..	South
Bhadraswa	...	East
Ketumala	..	West

-
1. See Map on p. 56 and drawing on p. 106. Cf. *Asiatick Researches* (Calcutta, 1805), Vol. 8, Plate facing p. 368, Fig. No. 1.
 2. We may call this earth-lotus Pushkara-Dwipa (Lotus Island). In the scheme of seven concentric islands the name was bestowed on the seventh dwipa.

This system of geography is also traceable in *Surya-Siddhanta* and *Siddhanta-Siromani*, wherein four cities are also mentioned along with the above countries.

For four *avatars* of Vishnu, associated with the above countries, please refer to *Vishnu Purana* (quoted on p. 62). These *avatars* were made part of the symbolism of cardinal points.

Fish (Matsya)	...	North
Tortoise (Kurma)	...	South
Horse (Haya-Siras)	...	East
Boar (Varaha)	...	West

It is significant that the tortoise is associated with Bharat-varsha, which accounts for the fact that India was supposed to have the form of a tortoise. Originally, the tortoise symbolized Jambu-dwipa (earth) and when India was identified with Jambu-dwipa, it was also likened to a tortoise.

LOTUS AS SEAT OF BRAHMA

When the lotus is projected on the sky, it symbolizes the Pole Star and serves as the seat of Horus (Egyptian), of Brahma (Hindu), and of Amitabh (Buddhist) who were, in fact, Pole Star personified.

Lotus also symbolizes the creation of the earth, i. e., volcanic birth of the North Polar Island. In sculptures and paintings Brahma is shown as seated on a lotus growing from the navel of Vishnu who is reclining on a seven-headed snake, called Ananta or Sesha-Naga. As Brahma was the Pole Star personified, we may infer that Vishnu is the personification of the Arctic Ocean, Ananta being its

theriomorphic representation. The stalk of lotus growing from the navel of Vishnu coincides with the axis of the earth.

THE EARTH AS TORTOISE

The idea that the earth has the form of a tortoise is found in many countries, e. g. India, China, Japan and America. In a popular Hindu drawing the dome of the sky is shown to rest on four elephants,³ standing on the back of a tortoise at cardinal points. The tortoise is floating on the surface of water, encircled by a serpent.⁴ Here the tortoise symbolizes the earth and serpent the ocean, i. e., North Polar Island in the Arctic Ocean.

Later on, the earth was conceived to rest on the back of a tortoise, called Akupara by the Hindus.⁵ The idea is also found in North America and American Indians believed that the "earthquakes are caused by movements of the tortoise who is supposed to support the world."⁶

TORTOISE INCARNATION

To obtain *Amrita* (nectar of immortality) gods and *asuras* decided to churn the Ocean of Milk. Vishnu incarnated as a tortoise to support Mount Meru, which was used as a churning staff. The serpent Vasuki served as a rope to twirl the staff. To understand this myth we shall have to interpret the main symbols as under :

-
3. The dome of the sky is wrongly interpreted as earth.
 4. This serpent is Ahi or Vritra of the Vedas, Ananta or Sesha-Naga of the Puranas and Midgard serpent of the Eddas.
 5. *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography, History, and Literature* by John Dowson (London : Trubner & Co. 1879), p. 10.
 6. *A Dictionary of Omens and Superstitions* by Philippa Waring, (Souvenir Press, London, 1978), p. 232.

Ocean of Milk	...	Arctic Ocean (Frozen)
Mount Meru	...	North Polar Mountain
Tortoise	...	North Polar Island
Vasuki	...	Constellation Draco

This myth is an exalted account of the eruption of Meru, an active volcano (long ago submerged). The catastrophe occurred when the Pole Star was alpha Draconis. The idea of churning was borrowed from the revolution of the stars around the Pole Star. This myth has a great resemblance to the ancient Japanese myth of creation.

TORTOISE OF HEAVENS

Hindu astronomers projected the form of the tortoise (symbol of North Polar Island) on the heavens. Originally, this tortoise symbolized the Pole Star, called Kashyapa (meaning tortoise). In *Taittiriya Aranyaka* I, 7, 1, Mount Meru is described as the seat of seven Adityas, while the eighth Aditya called Kashyapa is said never to leave the great Meru or Mahameru. Kashyapa is further described as imparting light to the seven Adityas, and himself perpetually illuminating the great mountain.⁷ Here the seven Adityas refer to the seven stars of the Great Bear, called also Sapta Rishis (Seven Sages) by the Hindus.

Tortoises are the longest-lived of all vertebrates (living 150 to 200 years) and slowest moving (on land 5 yards in a minute at the most).⁸ Their long life and slow motion make them an apt symbol of the Pole Star.

7. *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* by B. G. Tilak (Poona, 1956,) p.65.

8. *Guinness Book of World Records*, (Bantam Books, New York, 1974), pp.55-56, 84.

The tortoise was subsequently used to represent the whole of circumpolar sky as the dome shaped back of the tortoise resembles the dome of the sky. The following remarks of Dr. H. Kern on the subject support my argument :

The word *Kurma* is the specific Sanskrit form of a word once common to all Indo-European tongues, viz., *Kurma*, Lat. *culmus*, Teuton. *holm*, etc. It does not originally denote the 'tortoise' itself, but its back, for the proper meaning is "mound, buckle half-globe, holm". Even in Sanskrit, in such compounds as *Kurmonnata*, the word signifies the form of the back of the tortoise. At the time when the word *Kurma Vibhaga* became current, *Kurma* was taken in its proper sense. Yet in later times, they wholly mistook the meaning and made an absurd drawing, representing a tortoise, as if *Kurma* could denote a level. The rendering by 'globe' is not wholly exact, since properly only a half-globe, a *holm* is supposed to be raised above the waters⁹.

TORTOISE WHEEL

When vernal equinox was in Pleiades (*Krittika*), Hindu astronomers divided the form of heavenly tortoise into nine parts and allotted three *nakshatras* (lunar asterisms) to each part, beginning with *Krittika*. Thus arose the conception of *Kurma-Chakra* (tortoise-wheel). The relation of celestial and terrestrial tortoises is imaginary and has nothing to do with the human destiny.

The *Markandeya Purana* (Chapter 58).....has a section called *Kurma Vibhaga*, containing a list of countries and peoples of India arranged according to the position of the country conceived as a tortoise, as it lies on water, resting upon Vishnu and looking eastward.¹⁰

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9. Varahamihira's *Brihat Samhita*, English Translation and Notes by V. Subrahmanya Sastri (Bangalore, 1947), Vol. I, p. 160.
 10. *Historical Geography of Ancient India* by Dr. B. C. Law, pp. 1-2, quoted from *Studies in Skanda Purana* by Dr. A. B. L. Awasthi. (Kailash Prakashan, Lucknow, 1965), Part I, p. 1.

Prof. D. C. Sircar has thus commented on the subject :

The absurd conception of the shape of the Bharat-varsha as that of a tortoise (Vishnu in the tortoise form), facing the east, and the attempt to locate all the various territories on it is peculiar, among the Puranas, to the *Markandeya* (Ch. 58)*. It is really the fabrication of the astronomers and astrologers who associated nine divisions of the countries with particular constellations and thought that, when particular planets and constellations are occulted, the territories related to the constellations in question would pass through calamities. The nine limbs of the tortoise are the back, head, right forefoot, right flank, right hindfoot, tail, left hindfoot, left flank and left forefoot. A similar ninefold division of the Bharat-varsha is found in chapter 14 of Varahamihira's *Brihatsamhita*¹¹ (composed in the 6th. century A. D.). The first *sloka* of this work reads :

To the nine triads of stars commencing from Krittika belong the nine regions of the earth having Bharat-varsha as its centre and proceeding thence to the East, South-East, etc.¹²

*Also, in *Skanda Purana*.

11. *Cosmography and Geography in Early Indian Literature* by D. C. Sircar (Indian Studies : Past & Present, Calcutta, 1967), p. 90, Plate VII, reproduced on p. 107.

For arrangement and period of the *nakshatras* please refer to pages 29-30 of the present work.

12. Varahamihira's *Brihat Samhita*, Vol, I, p. 160. (See Note 9).

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This shows that originally the *Kurma-Chakra* (27 Nakshatras) covered not only Bharat-varsha** (in the centre) but eight other countries arranged according to eight points of the compass and covering the whole earth, i. e., Jambu-dwipa (or North Polar Island). As I have already stated (p. 99), here the tortoise conception of Jambu-dwipa has been superimposed on Bharat-varsha (India).

In the *Northern India Patrika*, Lucknow, dated August 20, 1980, a very important news item appeared, which reveals the antiquity of the idea of celestial tortoise and persistence of this idea from Paleolithic age to the age of Puranas. The news reads :

OLDEST STAR MAP FOUND

Moscow. Aug. 19, Soviet archaeologists have found what they say is the world's oldest star map, a 35,000 year-old stone tortoise with the biggest stars of the northern sky marked deep in its surface, Tass has reported.

The stone carving was uncovered by archaeologists excavating an ancient Siberian settlement. The Palaeolithic artist's map "has become a major breakthrough for historians and astronomers."

The shell features the major stars of the northern sky, including the north star, designated by the biggest hole, the Big Dipper and parts of the Cassiopeia constellation.

The map is often at variance with modern charts.

** Mythical, not India proper.

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The Big Dipper's handle is placed too low and the Alioth star known to navigators is far from its contemporary position.

A computer has mapped the sky of 35,000 years ago, and scientists believe that what may appear as errors in plotting the celestial bodies "is what proves both the authenticity of the map and the unknown astronomers's keen power to observe".

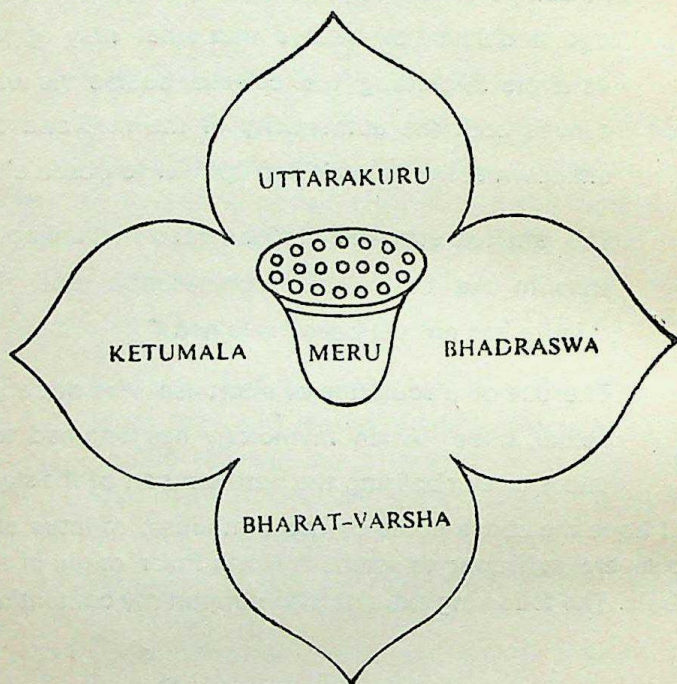
The ancient stargazer also included two unknown stars in the Ursa Major constellation, and this "riddle has not yet been explained."

The use of a sculpture of a tortoise was not accidental, since "Asain mythology has long had tortoises as symbolising the northern part of the sky."

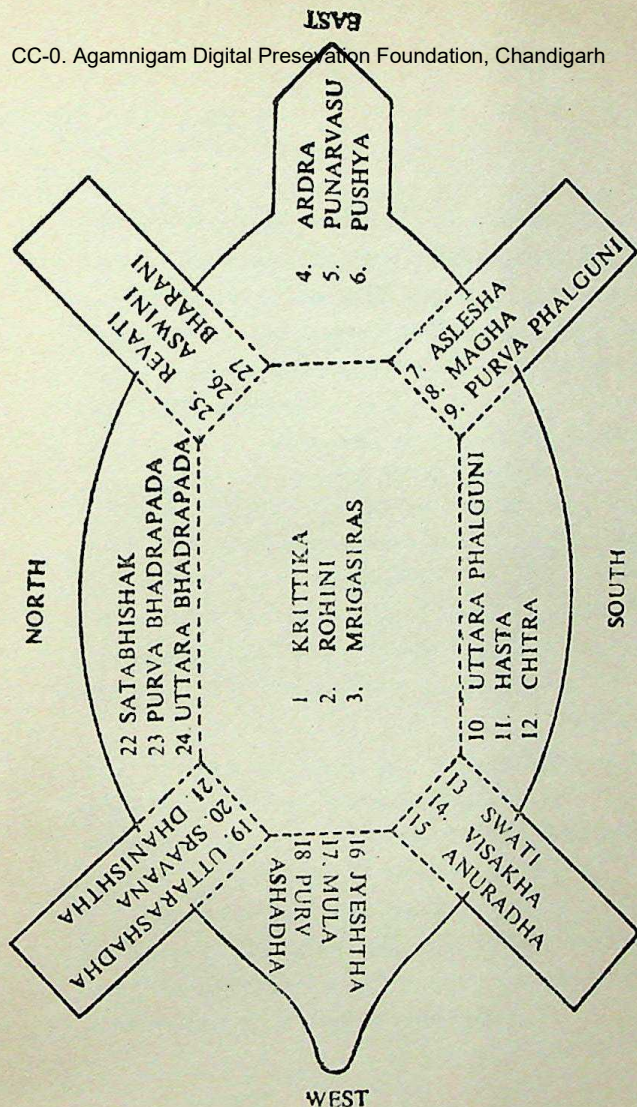
I hope the above notes on the symbolism of lotus and tortoise are sufficient to establish North Polar origin of the symbols. The following extracts also support my contention.

Lucknow : September 1982

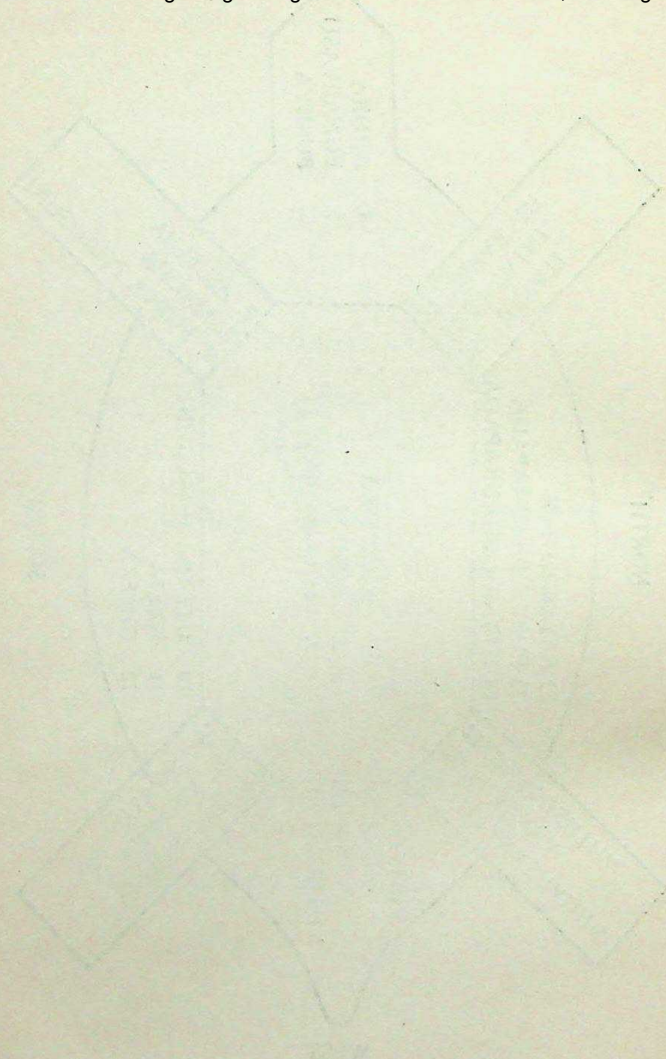
ISHAQ SIDDIQI



Earth Conceived as a Lotus of Four Petals



Kurma Chakra (Tortoise-Wheel)
Consisting of 27 Nakshatras



TORTOISE IN ART

CHINESE

The tortoise and serpent* were among the first totems of the Polar race, and while it may seem consistent that the cult migrated to China from India, there is evidence that it came from a nation of remote past from which India likewise may have derived its culture.

—Katherine M. Ball, *Decorative Motives of Oriental Art* (London & New York, 1927), p. 43.

In the *Brahmanas* it is stated that Kasyapa was the progenitor of gods and men, and Kasyapa is referred to in some places as the Pole Star, and in other as the tortoise; in fact the word Kasyapa means tortoise. This parallels the Chinese view of the relation of the tortoise to the northern constellation.

—Ibid., p.44.

The tortoise is used as a decorative motif on stands supporting musical instruments, sun-dials and time-pieces. "The connection between the tortoise and music is analogous to that of the tortoise and time, both being associated with the northern constellation Ursa Major, which is thought to be the bringer-forth of time, and therefore source from which all melodies emanate."

—Ibid., p. 51.

*The tortoise and serpent were symbols of the North Polar Island and the Arctic Ocean.

JAPANESE

The Japanese also worshipped the God of the North, whom they designated as Myoken Bosatsu. He is shown as a young prince holding a sword and standing on a tortoise upon which lies a serpent. He is known as "The Mysterious and Wonderful"; the deification of Polaris, the North Star; the protector of the welfare of the Creation and worshipped in the Nichiren temples.

—Ibid., p. 43.

In Japan the idea of support takes a more dignified form. It is found in connection with the sacred mountain Horaizan—the Abode of the Immortals—the same that is known in India as Sumeru, and in China as Mount Kwen Lun or Shou Shan—the Taoist Paradise. This mountain is thought to rest on the back of a great tortoise, an idea which has become a very popular theme of painters, particularly those of the Ukiyo-yo school.

—Ibid., p. 49.

EGYPTIAN

The Egyptians likewise found the tortoise valuable as a structural base. In the temple of Meaco, in addition to a stately chapel dedicated to the Creator of All Things, there is a walled pit, filled with water, under which stands an enormous tortoise (*cf. p. 112*). From it rises a tree of brass, the seat of a four armed figure.*

—Ibid., p., 46

*The tree of brass symbolizes the Tree of Life and the four armed figure is a variant of four headed Brahma.

GREEK

In the famous fable associated with the name of Atlas*, he is said by Homer to have the charge of the pillars which upheld the heavens...As it is obvious that he himself would in this case have to stand upon something, the ancients declared that he stood upon an elephant, which in turn stood upon a tortoise.

Phidias fashioned one of his famous sculptures of the fertile Venus with a tortoise under her foot,** the animal will also be found under the feet of ancient representations of both Apollo and Mercury. Moreover the tortoise is found as a support to many of the symbolical utensils used in religious rites.

—H. Cutner, *A Short History of Sex Worship*,
(London : Watts & Co.), pp. 178-79.

SOME SUPERSTITIONS

It appears from *Brihat Samhita* (chapter 64) that the Hindu kings used to keep tortoises in their palaces and gardens to ensure good luck. "Signs of Tortoises" are thus described in the book :

* Atlas was the personification of the North Polar Mountain.

** We may compare her to Lakshmi standing on lotus. This shows that lotus and tortoise are interchangeable.

Sloka 1.—A tortoise that has the colour of crystal or silver, that is marked with blue lines, that has a pot-like body, a beautiful back-bone, or has a red body, and is ornamented with spots in the form of white mustard seeds, gives one the over-lordship of all kings when being kept at home.

Sloka 2.—A tortoise that has a body dark in colour similar to collyrium or bee, that is beautified by spots, that has a full-grown body, a serpentine head or a broad neck, also conduces to the prosperity of the realms of kings.

Sloka 3.—A tortoise that has the lustre of beryl, a thick neck, a triangular shape, hidden cavities and a fine back-bone is auspicious. Such a tortoise should be kept in a pleasure-lake or in a basin full of water by kings for the sake of auspiciousness.

TORTOISE-SEAT

During worship, the *sadhaka* or worshipper sits in the *padmasana* posture on a plank, carpet, or other approved seat, generally facing east or west.

The commonest form of seat is a plank in the shape of a tortoise and is known by the name *Kurmasana*. This alone is used in temple worship in Kerala. For purposes of *japa*, a woollen carpet (*ratna kambala*) or a Kusa grass mat is occasionally used. The direction faced is *north* instead of west in some parts of North India.

8

QUEST FOR THE ORIGINAL GANGES

A comparative study of the mythical geography leads one to believe that in the remote past there was an island at the North Pole. It was just beneath the Pole Star. At the centre of this island there was a volcano. When this volcano became dormant, its crater was filled with water, transforming it into a crater lake. This lake gave birth to four rivers which flowed in opposite directions.

The wisp of smoke rising vertically from the crater of the North Polar Mountain coincided with the axis of the earth¹ In other words, the smoke made the axis of the earth visible, its upper end pointing towards the Pole Star and lower end touching the summit of the North Polar Mountain. The wisp of smoke was sometimes regarded as a river and sometimes as a bridge joining heaven and earth.² (See drawings on pp. 120-121)

1. The axis of the earth is an imaginary line round which the earth rotates. When the axis is projected towards the sky at the North Pole, it points towards the Pole Star.
2. This bridge was called Bifrost by the Nordics and Chinvat by the ancient Iranians. The bridge has been wrongly interpreted as rainbow and the celestial river as the Milky way.

The people of many countries in ancient times were, probably, aware of the North Polar Island and were in one way or the other impressed by it. This led them to interpret and explain the geography of their own homeland on the basis of the geography of the North Polar Island. In mythical geography original names (if any) were replaced by the local names.

Many of the characteristics of the North Polar Island were ascribed to sacred places all over the world. It appears that the sacred places in India too had their counterparts in the North Polar Island. To support my contention, I discuss below some of the myths and legends associated with the river Ganges, Mt. Kailasa, lake Manasarovara and the town of Hardwar.

THREE CURRENTS

"The sacred stream Ganga is believed to have three currents. In heaven the current is called Mandakini; on earth, it is called Ganga; and in the subterraneous world it is called Bhogavati."³

The idea of 'triple flowing' (*Tri patha-ga*)⁴ river is not peculiar to India. It is also found in Siberian mythology, classified as Motif A 657- "River connecting earth and upper and lower worlds."⁵

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3. *The Mahabharata*, Translated by P. C. Roy (Calcutta, Oriental Publishing Co., 2nd. Revised Edition), vol. V, p. 17, Note by the Translator.
 4. John Dowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology*, (London, 1879), pp. 108-9 (Ganga).
 5. S. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, vol. I. (Helsinki, 1932).

While passing through heaven, earth, and hell, the Ganges passes through the centre of the earth, *i. e.*, North Pole and coincides with the axis of the earth.⁶

The confluence (*sangam*) of Ganga, Jamuna, and the invisible Saraswati at Allahabad is called *Triveni*, 'The triple braid.'⁷

To explain the exact nature of these three rivers I propose the following equation :—

Saraswati	=	Mandakini (celestial Ganges)
Ganga	=	Ganga (terrestrial Ganges)
Jamuna	=	Bhogavati (infernial Ganges)

Saraswati is not only the name of river but also of a goddess, the wife of Brahma. As Brahma was personification of the Pole Star (see p. 51), Saraswati was also the Pole Star personified. The celestial Ganges (wisp of smoke) was, in my opinion, Saraswati, because it appeared to issue from the Pole Star.

Besides Saraswati, there is another river in India, which is associated with Brahma. The river is Brahmaputra, meaning 'the son of Brahma.' Obviously, Saraswati and Brahmaputra are two aspects (female and male) of the same river, *i. e.*, the celestial Ganges which coincided with the axis of the earth and thus connected with the Pole Star.

From the sky the Ganges descended on Mount Meru (North Polar Mountain), personified as Siva, (called Ganga-dhara, 'upholder of the Ganges').

It is significant that Yamuna (Jamuna), or Yami⁸ is the

6. The centre of the earth is called navel of the earth in mythical geography. It must be below the centre of the sky, *i. e.*, Pole Star, around which the stars appear to revolve due to rotation of the earth on its axis.

7. Dowson's *Dictionary* p. 322 (Tri-veni).

8. *Ibid.* p. 375 (Yami).

sister of Yama,⁹ the god of death, having his abode in the underworld.

According to one account, Ganga issues from the foot of Vishnu, falls in the *Kamandala* (vessel) of Brahma and overflowing it descends on the head of Siva, where it loses its velocity while circulating in the matted locks of Mahadeva and then reaches the earth in seven streams. This miracle could only occur at a place where the three great gods were in a straight line (vertically) and stationary. This was possible only at the North Pole, because Brahma, Siva and Vishnu are personifications of the Pole Star, North Polar Mountain, and the Arctic Ocean respectively. In this myth the status of Vishnu has been raised above Brahma, obviously, by the worshippers of Vishnu.

The *Kamandala* of Brahma symbolizes the crater-lake of the North Polar Mountain. It was also called Brahmasara, Amritsar, etc.

SEVEN STREAMS

The Matsya and Vayu Puranas relate the story of the descent of Ganges in seven streams. From the famous Vindu-sarovara (or Bindu-sarovara) three rivers flow to the east, three to the west and one to the south. They are named as Nalini, Hradini (or Hladini) and Pavani in the east; Sita, Chakshu and Sindhu in the west and Bhagirathi in the south ¹⁰

9. Ibid. p. 374 (Yama).

10. Syama Narayana Pandeya, *Geographical Horizon of the Mahabharata*, (Varanasi, Bharata-Bharati, 1980), p. 47.
S.M. Ali, *The Geography of the Puranas* (New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1973), p. 67.

The seven streams are also mentioned in the Mahabharata, but the names differ. "And there (at the lake Bindu-sarovara) the celestial stream Ganga, issuing out of the region of Brahman, first showed herself, and then dividing herself into seven streams, became Vaswokasara, Nalini, the sin-cleansing Saraswati, Jambunadi, Sita, Ganga and Sindhu as the seventh."¹¹

This shows that the real source of the celestial Ganges is the region of Brahman or Brahmaloaka, which I have identified with the Pole Star.

Vindu-sarovara or Bindu-sarovara was the crater-lake of the North Polar Mountain. It came into existence when the North Polar Mountain became dormant. This lake appears to have three names associated with Hindu trinity :

Manasarovara ¹²	...	Brahma
Vishnupada	...	Vishnu
Bindu-sarovara	...	Siva

The idea of the seven streams of Ganges is a variant of Sapta Sindhu, mentioned in the Rigveda. (See pp. 66-67.)

FOUR RIVERS

According to Vishnu Purana, Mount Meru is supported by four buttress mountains. On the summit of each of these mountains, there is a garden, a gigantic tree and a lake:

	Mountains	Gardens	Trees	Lakes
East	Mandara	Chaitaratha	Kadamba	Arunoda
South	Gandhamadana	Gandhamadana	Jambu	Mahabhadra
West	Vipula	Vaibhrajā	Pippala	Asitoda
North	Suparswa	Nandana	Vata	Manasa

11. *Mahabharata, Bhishma Parva*, Section VI, P. C. Roy's Translation, vol. V, p. 17.

12. It is the creation of the mind (*manas*) of Brahma.

CC-0. Agamganga Digital Preservation Foundation. On the summit of Meru is the city of Brahmavati. The capital of Brahma is enclosed by the river Ganges, which, issuing from the foot of Vishnu, and washing the lunar orb, falls here, from the skies, and, after encircling the city, divides into four mighty rivers, flowing in opposite directions. These rivers are the Sita, the Alakananda, the Chakshu and the Bhadra."¹³

Obviously, the above mentioned four rivers descending from the summit of Meru on its four buttress mountains pass through four gardens and four lakes. Each garden, tree, lake and river corresponds to a cardinal point. There is no doubt that this four-fold division is the result of an attempt to create a geographical system perfect in every respect. Presumably, there was only one tree (Jambu) and one lake (Manasarovara) on the summit of Meru. The four buttress mountains are just replicas of the central mountain. As already explained, Jambu tree on the summit of Meru was the smoke rising from the crater of the North Polar Mountain in the form of a tree. (See p. 50.) When Meru became dormant its crater was filled with water and it became a lake, the original Manasarovara, the source of the four rivers of Jambu-dwipa. The lake of the same name in the Himalayas is its substitute.

There are three stages in the descent of Ganges :

- (1) It issues from the foot of Vishnu,
- (2) falls on the summit of Meru,
- (3) descends on the earth in four or seven streams.

The foot of Vishnu (Vishnupada) was above the summit of Meru. It was the Pole Star or the region above it. The city of Brahma on the summit of Meru is a variant of Amara-vati, the city of Indra. (See p. 53.)

13. For full quotation please refer to pages 60-61.
See drawings on p.p. 56, 120-21.

FOUR ANIMALS

In the Tibetan Kailasa Purana (*Kangri Karchhak*) the lake Mansarovara is mentioned as the source of four rivers which flow in four directions. Each river issues from the mouth of an animal :

West	Ganga	Elephant
South	Sindhu	Peacock
East	Vakshu	Horse
North	Sita	Lion

The conception of four great rivers issuing from a central lake is also found in Buddhist scriptures. Yuan Chwang refers to the Anotatta (Anavatapta) lake with four rivers issuing from the mouths of the following animals made of four precious metals :

East	Ganga	Ox of Silver
South	Sindhu	Elephant of Gold
West	Vakshu	Horse of Lapislazuli
North	Sita	Lion of Crystal

These four animals (bull, elephant, horse and lion) also appear on the Sarnath Pillar (Asokan Pillar) which is our national emblem. They are supposed to symbolize four directions or four quarters of the earth.¹⁴ This idea was perhaps borrowed from the Chinese mythology, wherein four seasons were symbolized by the following animals :¹⁵

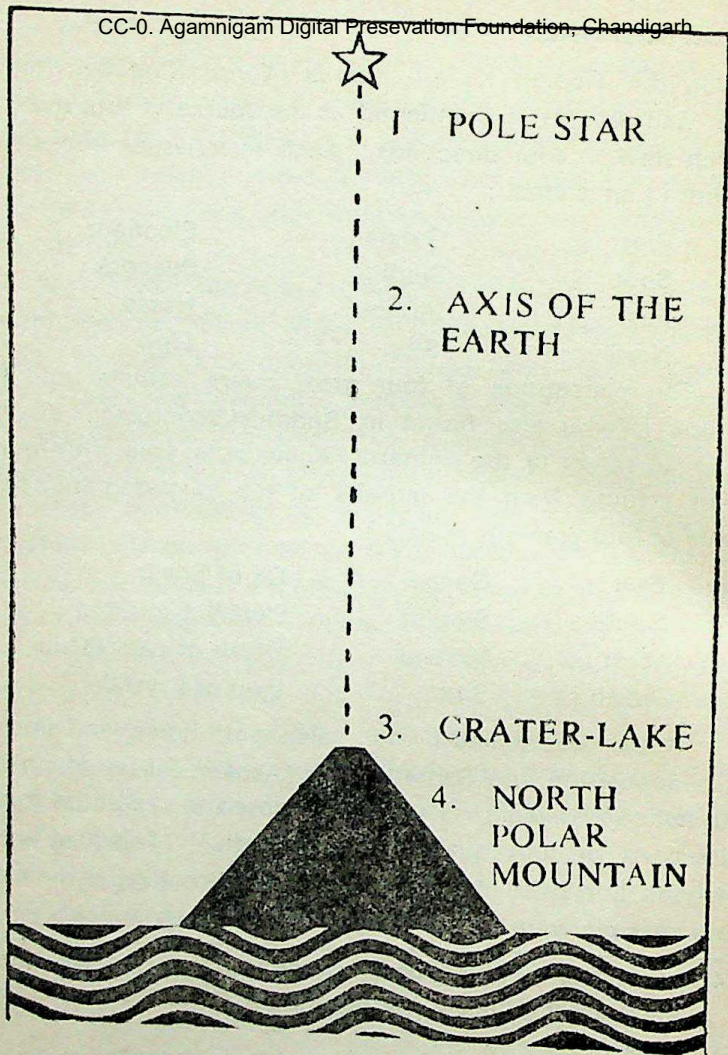
14. 'According to the Ceylonese arrangement, the lion of the north, the elephant of the east, the bull of the west, and the horse of the south.'

—V. S. Agarwala, *The Wheel Flag of India: Chakra-Dhvaja* (Varanasi, 1964) p. 70, see also pp. ii-iv-35,36.

15. Katherine M. Ball, *Decorative Motives of Oriental Art* (London & New York, 1927) p. 41.

The Origin of Celestial Ganges

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1 = Brahma or Vishnupada

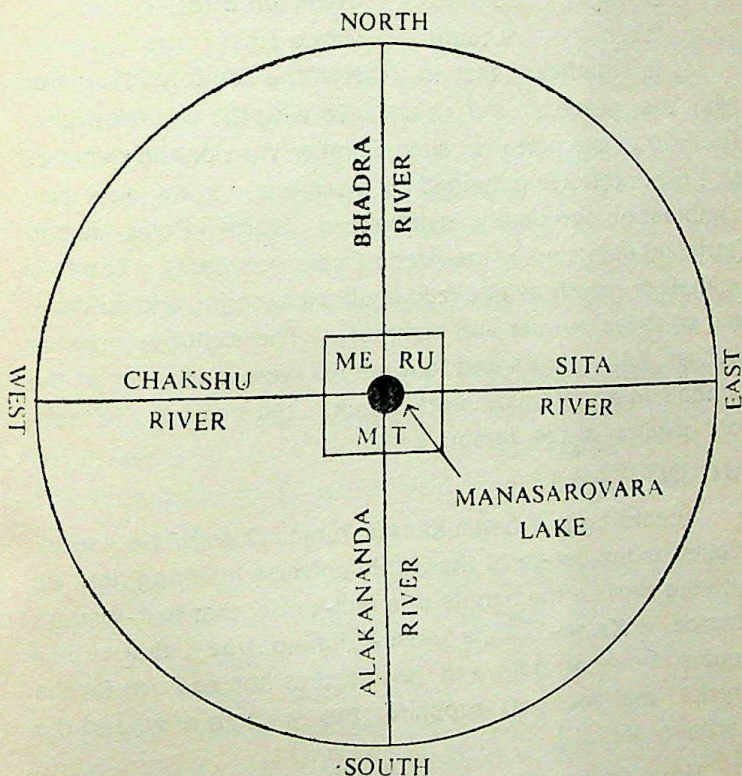
3 = Lake Manasarovara

2 = Celestial Ganges

4 = Mount Meru

The Branches of Celestial Ganges

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Four Rivers of Jambu-dwipa
(North Polar Island)

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North	Winter	Black Tortoise entwined by a Serpent
East	Spring	Blue Dragon
South	Summer	Vermilion Bird
West	Autumn	White Tiger

It is significant that in Tibetan the south is associated with the peacock and in Chinese with the vermilion bird. The lord of the north is called Sombre Warrior and depicted as a black tortoise entwined by a serpent. In my view this combination originally symbolized North Polar Island (tortoise) encircled by the Arctic Ocean (serpent). The four animals originally symbolized equinoxes (spring and autumn) and solstices (winter and summer). These four animals as well as four colours and four metals were made part of the symbolism of cardinal points which is the basis of the four-fold division of the Jambu-dwipa.

MOUNT KAILASA

According to Tibetan Kailasa Purana (*Kangri Karchhak*), "Kailas is the centre of the whole universe towering right up into the sky like the handle of a mill-stone, that half-way on its side is *Kalpa-Vriksha* (wish-fulfilling tree), that it has square sides of gold and jewels, that the eastern face is crystal, the southern sapphire, the western ruby, and the northern gold."¹⁶

Here Kailasa has been identified with Mount Meru, which at the centre of the universe, served as the pivot of revolving heavens (comparable to the 'handle of a mill-stone').

The *Kalpa-Vriksha* was not half-way on the side of

16. Swami Pranavananda, *Kailas-Manasarovar*, (S.P. League, Calcutta, 1949), p. 8.

Kailasa. It is a variant of Jambū tree which was on the summit of Meru. (See p. 50.)

MANASAROVARA

According to Tibetan Kailasa Purana, "There are seven rows of trees round the Holy Manasarovar, and there is a big mansion in it, in which resides the King of *Nags* (serpent-gods) and the surface of the Lake is like an arc with a huge tree in the middle. The fruits of the tree fall into the Lake with the sound *Jam*; so the surrounding region of the earth is named 'Jambuling', the Jambu-dwipa of the Hindu *Puranas*. Some of the fruits that fall into the Lake are eaten by the *Nags* and the rest become gold and sink down to the bottom."¹⁷

Here seven rows of trees encircling Manasarovara correspond to seven dwipas. The lake Manasarovara has been identified with the Ocean of Salt Water, *i. e.*, Arctic Ocean, encompassing North Polar Island (Jambu dwipa).

HARDWAR

This famous place of pilgrimage is associated with Siva (Hara) and Vishnu (Hari) both. Its name means 'the gate of Har' (Hara-dwara) or the 'gate of Hari' (Hari-dwara).

Here Ganges finally breaks through the mountains (Gangotri Range) into the plains of India. It is called Ganga-dwara, 'the Gate of Ganges'.¹⁸ The main bathing ghat is known as *Hari Ki Pairi* or *Hari Ka Charan* which is the Hindi translation of Sanskrit *Vishnupada* (Vishnu's footprint).

According to Puranas, heavenly Ganges issues from

17. Ibid. p. 9.

18. Dowson's *Dictionary*, p. 117 (Hari-dwara), p. 109 (Ganga-dwara).

the foot of Vishnu which (*Vishnupada*) identify with the Pole Star. As such *Hari Ki Pairi* in Hardwar is just symbolical. It can not be on earth but on heaven, at the source of the celestial Ganges.

Hardwar has been identified with the city of Brahma on the summit of Meru. Its name 'the gate of Hari' reminds one of the ancient Babel (*Bab-Ilu*, to be precise, Greek Babylon) which means 'the Gate of God.'¹⁹

VISHNU'S HIGHEST FOOTSTEP

The Ganges is called Vishnupadi because it issues from the footprint of Vishnu.²⁰ The oldest reference to Vishnu's three strides (*Pauranic Vaman* or *Trivikrama Avatara*) is found in Rigveda.²¹ Here are the relevant verses :

16. The gods be gracious unto us even from the
place whence Vishnu strode
Through the seven regions of the earth.
17. Through all this world strode Vishnu; thrice
his foot he planted, and the whole
Was gathered in his footstep's dust.

19. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Micropaedia*, vol. I, (1977), p. 707 (Babel, Tower of), p. 710 (Babylon).

20. "As Amarasinha (contemporary of Kalidas) gives Vishnupadi as one of the synonyms of the Ganges, it is certain that the legend of its rise from Vishnu's foot is as old as the 5th century."

—*Encyclopedia of Religion & Ethics*,
vol. 6, p. 516 (Hardwar),

21. *The Hymns of the Rgeveda*, Translated by Ralph T. H. Griffith, (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1963) vol. I, p. 27.

20. The princes* evermore behold that loftiest place
where Vishnu is,
Laid as it were an eye in heaven.
21. This, Vishnu's station most sublime, the singers,
ever vigilant,
Lovers of holy song, light up.**

—Book I, Hymn 22.

Vishnu's three strides are generally interpreted as the three daily stations of the Sun, his rising, culminating and setting. I do not agree with this view, because in this hymn Vishnu is not the personification of the Sun but of the Pole Star. Vishnu's loftiest place, his most sublime station, set like an eye in heaven, is the Pole Star.

The theme is again taken up in Rigveda, Book I, Hymn 154, verses 1-6: ²²

1. I will declare the mighty deeds of Vishnu, of him
who measured out the earthly regions,
Who propped the highest place of congregation,
thrice setting down his footstep, widely striding.
5. May I attain to that his well-loved mansion where
men devoted to the gods are happy
For there springs, close akin to the Wide-Strider,
the well of meath in Vishnu's highest footstep.
6. Fain would we go unto your dwelling places where
there are many-horned and nimble oxen,
For mightily, there, shineth down upon us the
widely-striding Bull's sublimest mansion.

According to Griffith, the highest place of congregation of the gods is the heaven. Meath or nectar is the celestial Soma. Many horned and nimble oxen are the stars with their ever-twinkling rays.

*The princes : the Suris, the wealthy patrons of sacrifice. Griffith.

**Light up : glorify with praises.—Griffith.

To this explanation I would like to add that Vishnu's highest footstep and his sublimest mansion is the Pole Star. The well of meath, the source of celestial Soma of Rigveda, is the source of the celestial Ganges of the Puranas.

The source of celestial waters is also referred to in Rigveda IX, 113, 8 which reads as under:²³

Make me immortal in that realm, where
dwells the King, Vivasvan's Son,
Where is the secret shrine of heaven, where
are those waters young and fresh. Flow
Indu, flow for Indra's sake.

According to Griffith, the King here means Yama, the ruler of departed spirits. To this explanation it is necessary to add that the realm of Yama, the secret shrine of heaven and the source of young and fresh waters, was the Pole Star. This shows that before Yama became lord of the underworld and guardian of the south, he was associated with the Pole Star, personified as judge of the dead.

According to Vedic cosmology, the sky was regarded as the abode of the gods and referred to as the third region, (earth and atmosphere being the first and second regions). This is borne out by the following verse :²⁴

In the third region, which distils a thousand
streams, may the exhaustless ones descend with
procreant power.

The Kindred Four have been sent downward from
the heavens: dropping with oil they bring Amrit and
sacred gifts.

—Rigveda IX, 74, 6.

23. Ibid. vol. II, p. 381.

24. Ibid. vol. II, p. 332.

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Griffith explains in a footnote : "The Kindred Four, meaning, according to Sayana, four rays or digits of Soma (Moon). It is most probable that the four goddesses, Sinivali, Kuhu or Gungu, Raka and Anumati are meant."

I have reason to differ with this interpretation. The Kindred Four do not move like moon in the heavens, but descend like streams. The four goddesses are supposed to be the lunar goddesses or personifications of the moon in its various phases. I am inclined to believe that they originally denoted four rivers of the North Polar Island, four branches of the celestial Ganges or Saraswati.

These goddesses have been referred to in Rigveda II, 32, 8, translated by Griffith as under :²⁵

Her, Sinivali, her Gungu, her Raka, her Saraswati, Indrani to mine aid I call, and Varunani for my weal.

Indra is the controller of rains, Varuna is the god of Ocean (Pauranic Vishnu) and so are their consorts. Saraswati is the name of a river. So the remaining goddesses must also be connected with waters. In other words, they should be rivers and not phases of the moon. (Gungu may be a variant of Ganga.)

To sum up, the place of origin of the idea of the celestial Ganges and its four branches was the North Pole. Besides Puranas, the idea is also traceable in Rigveda, the oldest surviving Hindu scripture.

Lucknow: December 1982

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25. Ibid. vol. I, p.299.

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9

THE ABODE OF GOD AND MOTHER GODDESS

According to anthropologists, the first form of social organisation was matriarchal. In this system of society mother used to be the head of the family and the Mother Goddess was the object of worship. When the socieity became patriarchal father became the head of the family and the worship of the Mother Goddess was replaced by the worship of God, conceived as Father.

In ancient times it was a widespread belief that the Mother Goddess dwelt on a mountain. On a Cretan sealing of c.1500 B.C. she is shown standing on a mountain.¹ We may compare the Mother Goddess of Crete with Hindu Parvati, who is the 'daughter of mountain.' (*Parvata* means 'mountain'). She is also called *Girija*, meaning 'Mountain born.' Her husband, Siva, is known as *Girisa*, meaning the 'Lord of the Mountain'.² Hindus belive that Siva and Parvati

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1. Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God : Occidental Mythology* (Penguin Books, 1976), p. 45.
 2. John Dowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology etc.* (London, 1879), p. 112 (*Girija*); p. 300 (*Siva*).

live on Mount Kailasa in the Himalayas (also called Himavat and regarded as the father of Parvati). I have already shown that Kailasa is a substitute for Mount Meru. (See p. 122.)

According to Bible, the holy Mountain of God or the Mount of the Congregation is 'in the sides of the north.'³ According to Hindu belief, Meru, the mountain of gods, is situated at the North Pole. From this I infer that the mountain represented on the Cretan sealing, and referred to in the Bible, is the same mountain which the Hindus call Meru. I have pointed out that Meru was a volcano and part of a submerged island which I have named the North Polar Island.

In the matriarchal age the North Polar Island was regarded as the abode of Mother Goddess and called Manidwipa, 'the Island of Gems' by the Hindus. In the patriarchal age it was regarded as the abode of God (Vishnu) and named Sweta-dwipa, 'the white Island'. It is significant that the abode of God or Mother Goddess was placed far away from the inhabited world.

Sweta-dwipa was inaccessible to ordinary human beings. Only sages, like Narada, could reach there and see the glory of God. There is a vivid description of *aurora borealis* in Mahabharata. It was regarded as manifestation of Vishnu. A synopsis of my researches about this mysterious land of God and abode of Mother Goddess is given below.

UTTARA KURU VARSHA

According to Vishnu Purana, Uttara Kuru is the seventh and last division (*varsha*) of Jambu-dwipa, farthest to the north, counting from Bharat-varsha in the south.

The oldest reference to Uttara Kuru is found in *Aitareya*

3. *Ezekiel* 28 : 14., *Isaiah* 14 : 13.

Brahmana (VIII,23) wherein it is described "as the land of gods which no mortal can conquer."

In *Kaushitaki Brahmana* (VII,6) we are told "in the northern region speech is better known and better spoken, and it is to the north that men go to learn speech".⁴

It was correctly observed by Muir that "some faint reminiscence of an early connection with the north may be traced in these passages".⁵

Bal Gangadhar Tilak identified Uttara Kuru with the Arctic region, which in his view, was the original home of the Aryans.

According to S. M. Ali, Uttara Kuru is Siberia because in Valmiki Ramayana it is placed south of the Northern Ocean (Uttara Samudra) which is generally identified with the Arctic Ocean.⁶

I agree with the views of the above mentioned scholars. I would, however, like to point out that there is some evidence which suggests that the North Polar Island was also called Uttara Kuru.

AIRAVATA-VARSHA

According to Jain cosmology, Jambu-dwipa consists of seven regions (*varshas*). Bharata is in the extreme south and Airavata is in the extreme north.⁷ I infer from this that Airavata-varsha corresponds to Uttara Kuru-varsha of Vishnu Purana.

4. B.G. Tilak, *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* (Poona, 1956), pp. 362-63.

5. John Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts* (3rd. ed.), Vol. II, pp. 322-29., quoted by Tilak, p. 363.

6. S.M. Ali, *The Geography of the Puranas* (New Delhi, 1973), pp. 20, 22, 43, 72, 73, 76.

7. Walther Schubring, *The Doctrine of the Jainas* (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1962), pp. 216-17.

Airavata is king of elephants and the mount (*vahan*) of Indra. I guess Airavata was not an ordinary elephant, but a mammoth, an extinct species of elephant. These animals were abundantly found in Siberia in prehistoric times.⁸ It was for these animals that Siberia was named Airavata-varsha. It was the mammoth which inspired the idea that the dome of the sky was supported by four or eight elephants which guarded the cardinal points at the edge of the earth. These elephants were called *Lokapalas*.⁹

In Jain cosmology Uttara Kuru and Deva Kuru are placed in the very heart of Jambu-dwipa. They correspond to Ilavrita-varsha of Vishnu Purana. This compels me to believe that the name Uttara Kuru (or Deva Kuru) was applicable not only to Siberia but also to the North Polar Island.

MANI-DWIPA

According to *Ananda Lahari*, stanza 8, "the island of gems (*mani-dwipa*) is in the centre of the ocean of nectar."¹⁰ It is the abode of *Tripura-Sundri*, the Divine Mother.

The layout of the abode of the Great Mother is as detailed below, counting from outside towards the centre :

8. I. Velikovsky, *Worlds in Collision* (London, Abacus edition, 1972), pp. 36-38.
9. John Dowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology, etc.*, (London, 1879), p. 9 (*Airavata*); p. 180 (*Loka-palas*).
10. *Ananda Lahari* (The Blissful Wave) of Sri Sankaracharya, Translation and Commentary by Swami Sivananda (Calcutta, The S. P. League, 1949), pp. Xiii, 13-14.

(1) Sea of nectar

(2) Island of Gems

(3) City of Sri Vidya

(4) Chintamani Palace

(5) Garden of Nipa trees

(6) Kalpa-vriksha in the centre

(7) Platform beneath the tree

(8) Throne of precious stones

(9) Mother Goddess seated on the throne

The Island of Gems was also called Ratna-dwipa, Gomeda-dwipa, Mukti-dwipa (the Island of Liberation), Sri-dwipa (the Fortunate Island), Sri Parvata (the Fortunate Mountain), etc.¹¹

I identify this Island of Gems with the submerged North Polar Island and Ocean of Nectar (*amrita sagar*) with the Arctic Ocean which was churned to obtain *amrita*. (See p. 100.) The *kalpa-vriksha* is a variant of the Tree of Life or Tree of knowledge in Eden, the Garden of God.

SWETA-DWIPA

In Mahabharata (Shanti Parva, Chapter 336, verse 8) we read "Towards the north, in the Ocean of Milk, there is a large island, named White Island (*Sweta-dwipa*)."¹² It is the abode of Narayana. The rishis Ekata, Dwita and Trita went there to see the God but could not withstand His refulgence, only Narada could see Him. However, Narada was told :

11. F. Wilford, *Asiatick Researches* (Calcutta, 1810), Vol. XI, p. 21.

12. A Prose English Translation of *The Mahabharata*, Edited and Published by M. N. Dutt (Calcutta, 1903), p. 535.

"What you see of me, O Narada, is merely an illusion of mine . . . If I wish, I can dissolve this form in a moment." (Chapter 340, verses 43-44.)¹³

Other names for the Sweta-dwipa are Sukla-dwipa (White Island), Kshira-dwipa (Milk Island), and Teja-sthan (Place of Refulgence).¹⁴

I identify Sweta-dwipa with the North Polar Island after glaciation, Ocean of Milk with the frozen Arctic Ocean and the divine refulgence with the *aurora borealis*.

Here I would like to remove a misconception. According to Mahabharata, the White Island is to the north-west of Meru.¹⁵ As a matter of fact, Meru was part of the White Island and in its centre.

In chapters 163 and 164 of the Vana Parva of Mahabharata, Arjun's visit to the Mount Meru is described in detail and we are therein told: "at Meru the sun and the moon go round from left to right (*pradakshinam*) every day and so do all the stars." Later on, the writer informs us: "The mountain, by its lustre, so overcomes the darkness of night, that the night can hardly be distinguished from the day." A few verses further we find, "The day and night are together equal to a year to the residents of the place." ... 'The reference to the *lustre of the mountain* is specially interesting, in as much as, in all probability it is a description of the splendours of the *aurora borealis* visible at the North Pole'.¹⁶

13. Ibid., p. 545.

14. F. Wilford, *Asiatick Researches* (1810), Vol. XI, pp. 20 ff.

15. *Shanti Parva*, verses 7-8.

16. B.G. Tilak, *Arctic Home in the Vedas* (1956), p. 64.

According to Mahabharata¹⁷ (Bhishma Parva, Sections XI-XII), the surface of the earth consists of seven islands, surrounded by as many oceans. However, only six islands and six oceans have been mentioned by name. They are :

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----|---------------------------|
| 1. Jambu-dwipa | ... | Ocean of salt water |
| 2. Saka-dwipa | ... | Ocean of milk |
| 3. Kusa-dwipa | ... | Ocean of clarified butter |
| 4. Salmali-dwipa | ... | Ocean of curds |
| 5. Krauncha-dwipa | ... | Ocean of wine |
| 6. Pushkara-dwipa | ... | Ocean of fresh water |

A comparison of this with the geography of Vishnu Purana will reveal that Plaksha-dwipa, surrounded by the ocean of sugar-cane juice, has been omitted in Mahabharata. The arrangement of the islands also differs. Curiously enough, they are not concentric (as described in the Puranas), because it is explicitly stated :

"The islands, O king, are double in area of one another as they proceed farther and farther towards the north."¹⁸

It means that the islands are situated in a straight line (which passes through their centres), starting from Jambu-dwipa in the south and ending at Pushkara-dwipa in the extreme north.

It is significant that in this system of geography the importance of the north has been hinted again and again :

17. *The Mahabharata* : Translated into English Prose from the Original Sanskrit Text by P.C. Roy (Calcutta, Oriental Publishing Co., 2nd. Revised Ed.), Vol. V, pp. 26-31.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 28

- (1) "The measure of six mountains (in each dwipa, except the last one, proceeding from south to north) "is double that of the one mentioned immediately before." ¹⁹
- (2) "The intervening spaces between one another of these six mountains increaseth in the ratio of one to two as they proceed further and further towards the north." ²⁰
- (3) "In all these islands.. the *Brahmacharyya*, truth, and self-control of the dwellers, as also their health and periods of life, are in the ratio of one to two as the islands are more and more remote (northwards)." ²¹

Pushkara dwipa, being farthest to the north (seventh in the original scheme) is the largest, holiest and best of all. It has thus been described in Mahabharata :

"In (the island of) Pushkara is a mountain called Pushkara that abounds with jewels and gems. There always dwelleth the divine *Parajapati* himself." ²²

The Pushkara mountain, abounding in jewels and gems reminds one of Meru, having the abode of Brahma on its summit. (Cf. Mani-dwipa.) In other words, Pushkara-dwipa (the Lotus Island) is North Polar Island like Jambu-dwipa.

SAKA-DWIPA

The North Polar Island was also called Saka-dwipa. It is described in Bhishma Parva of Mahabharata (Section XI) in detail. There are four clues to identify it :

19. Ibid., p.27

20. Ibid., p. 29

21. Ibid., p. 30

22. Ibid., p. 30

- (1) It was surrounded by the Ocean of Milk, i. e. the frozen Arctic Ocean.
- (2) There were seven mountains. "The first of these mountains is called Meru. It is the abode of the gods, *Rishis*, and *Gandharvas*."²³
- (3) There was the river Ganges divided into seven branches.
- (4) The very name of Saka-dwipa, which means "the Island of Teak Tree."

The teak tree, by virtue of its straight and bare trunk symbolizes the axis of the earth. It is a reminiscent of Jambu (rose-apple) tree which surmounted Mount Meru. Obviously, Saka-dwipa is a variant of Jambu-dwipa.

"In the Matsya-Purana we read, that in the dwipa of Saka is Rajata Mahan-Astagiri, called also Somaka, or the country or Island of the Moon. There the gods obtained *amrita*, and from thence Garuda carried it away for his mother".²⁴

"In the Vaman-Purana the White Island is called Saka, because it is really the same."²⁵ In other words, the North Polar Island was called Sweta-dwipa or Saka-dwipa; and the North Polar Mountain was called Meru, Rajata-giri, Astagiri, etc.

According to Bhavishya Purana, the ancestors of Saka-dwipi Brahmans resided originally in Saka-dwipa and from there migrated to India.

Sakadwipi Brahmans mostly live in eastern Uttar Pradesh and western Bihar. They are also known as Maga

23. Ibid., p. 27

24. F. Wilford, *Asiatick Researches* (1810), vol. XI, p. 54.

25. Ibid., p. 57

Brahmans which shows that they were related to the ancient priests of Iran, called Magus in Persian and Magi in the Bible. It is believed that they came to India from Persia or Scythia, and introduced Sun-worship.²⁶ It is not unlikely that they were related to Hyperboreans, who worshipped the Sun-god Apollo.

SURYA-DWIPA & CHANDRA-DWIPA

In view of its six month long day and golden colour of the sun, the North Polar Island was named :

Surya-dwipa	...	Island of the Sun
Suvarna-dwipa	...	Island of Gold
Kanchana-bhumi	...	Land of Gold

With reference to its six month long night and silvery colour of the moon, the North Polar Island was called :

Chandra-dwipa	...	Island of the Moon
Rajata-dwipa	...	Island of Silver
Raupya-bhumi	...	Land of Silver ²⁷

In Valmiki Ramayana (Kishkindhya Kandam, Chapter 30) the Islands of gold and silver are erroneously placed in the east instead of in the north.²⁸

SOMAGIRI

As the sun and moon circumambulated the North Polar Mountain, it was given two names : Mountain of the Sun and Mountain of the Moon, being the diurnal and nocturnal aspects of the one and the same mountain. After the people migrated from North Pole, the Mountain of the Sun

26. S.M.Ali, *The Geography of the Puranas* (1973), pp.5-6, 33. 205-207.

27. F. Wilford, *Asiatick Researches* (1810), vol. XI, pp.16-22.

28. *The Ramayana*, Translated from the Original of Valmiki, by M.L. Sen (Calcutta, Oriental Publishing Co., 3rd. ed.) vol. 2., p.116.

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 was replaced in the mythical geography by two mountains :
 the Mountain of Sunrise (Udayagiri) and the Mountain of
 Sunset (Astagiri), located in east and west respectively.
 The Mountain of Moon (Somagiri) is thus described in
 Chapter 33 of Valmiki Ramayana :

"After that (Uttara Kuru) lies the northern sea. The
 golden Somagiri is situated in that. Though the
 Sun does not rise in that region, yet it is illumined
 by the Somagiri . . . There resides Sambhu, the
 Soul of the universe and the chief of the gods, being
 surrounded by the Brahmarshis . . . Nobody can go
 there. It is inaccessible even to the gods
 Beyond it lie infinite space and eternal darkness."²⁹

Here Uttara Kuru refers to Siberia, Northern Sea to
 the Arctic Ocean and Somagiri to the North Polar Mountain.

Other names for Somagiri were Soma-Parvata, Soma-
 Saila, Rajatagiri, etc. The Mountain of the Moon (Arabic
Jabal-ul-Qamar) in Africa and Mount Sinai (Mountain of
 the moon-god*) in Sinai Peninsula are reminiscent of Soma-
 giri. In northern Tanzania (Africa) there is a mountain called
 Meru.³⁰ When and by whom these mountains were so
 named to commemorate the North Polar Mountain requires
 further research.

Lucknow : December 1983

ISHAQ SIDDIQI

*Sin (pronounced 'Seen') was the moon-god of the Semites

29. Ibid., pp.128-29.

30. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Micropaedia*, vol. VI, p.813 (Meru,
 Mount).

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